THE COMICAL

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The Comical

A Philosophical Analysis

by

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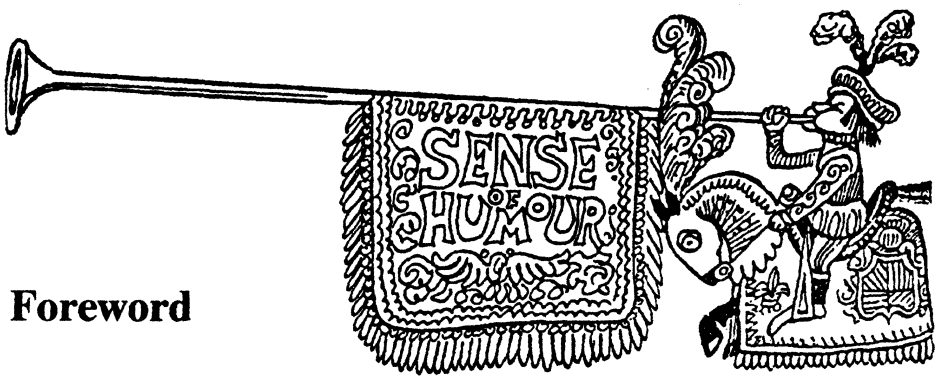


Foreword

The problem of the comical is one of the most interesting issues in aesthetics. Its significance extends well beyond the sphere of aesthetic studies and has attracted the attention of the scholars working in other fields such as the theorists and historians of particular art forms, sociologists, psychologists, as well as anthropologists, ethnographers and the theorists of education.

Philosophy has devoted a lot of attention to the comical. Since Aristotle almost every philosopher has felt obliged to comment on this question. However, even though they have offered a number of accurate observations on the subject, the philosophers involved in the discussion about the comical have earned a reputation of being rather devoid of the sense of the comical and many a time their considerations have been compared to those of a blind man talking about colours. And yet the problem of the comical kept attracting them to such an extent that they paid no heed to the difficulties involved and neglected the risk of becoming ridiculous themselves. Adolf Zeissing once remarked that all the literature on the comical is a "comedy of errors" committed while defining the comical. Yet even he could not resist the temptation of adding another page to this "comedy of errors". Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński claimed that the good thing about the philosophical writing concerning the comical is that it offers not only the theory of the comical but at the same time is the theory's practical application. Yet he did venture to create his own theory of laughter even though this move was the most certain way to jeopardize his reputation of being one of the wittiest Poles

of his time. His victory, however, owed a lot to the fact that his reputation was too strong to have been undermined. No wonder, then, that, unlike Boy, having nothing to lose, the author of this work yielded to the charm of this eternal problem and is now submitting to the reader the results of his preoccupation with the subject.

According to a popular conviction the writing on the comical should itself be witty. One can be witty almost about anything. However, contrary to journalism, scientific studies need neither be witty nor entertaining. No one demands from the authors of theoretical treatises on poetry that they wrote them in verse; no one claims that the works of aestheticians should evoke aesthetic experiences. No one also holds that works on tragedy and the tragic are obliged to evoke the emotions of pity and fear and produce a cathartic effect in the readers.

The present book is a re-worked (partly extended, partly shortened) version of my doctoral dissertation written in the Department of Philosophy of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and defended in 1963 at its Faculty of Letters. It was published in 1967 by Książka i Wiedza Publishers *in Warsaw and in 1974 its Russian translation appeared in Moscow (*Progress Publishers*).*

The first version of the book was written more than a quarter of a century ago. In the life of science and of scientists a period of such a length makes an epoch. Science goes on developing and scientists get old. Together with the scientists their analyses and conclusions, even some subjects they have been working on, get old as well. Luckily, however, the comical has its place on the list of eternal subjects in the humanities which seem never to lose their attraction and importance. Besides, changes, not to mention revolutions, in the humanities take much more time than changes in the natural sciences and new ideas do not always mean that earlier conceptions are automatically rejected as completely old-fashioned.

The proposal from the editors of Nijhoff International Philosophy Series *and* Kluwer Academic Publishers *to have the book published in English obviously had too much appeal to be rejected. My first feelings, however, were rather mixed. After twenty five years the book should actually have been rewritten from scratch, a move impossible because of my present interests and commitments.*

Having re-read the book, however, I realized that its structure and its basic theoretical analyses stand the chance of self-defence. That is why I decided to publish the book in English.

Naturally, its English version differs from the Polish one. First of all, many examples of the comical taken either from the Polish humourist writing or from the comedy film production of the 1960s which either might be culturally incomprehensible to contemporary reader or were too difficult or simply impossible to translate, had to go. These changes were introduced in the process of translating the book and resulted in a slightly smaller amount of the illustrative material since it was not always possible to find English or more up-to-date substitutes.

Similar modifications have been made in the bibliography. The works of lesser importance for the theory of the comical (mainly Polish and Russian) were replaced with the most significant works on the subject published after 1967. This task was made easier with the help of the excellent Humor. International Journal of Humor Research *which not only provides current news on the most important research work concerning the comical but at the same time stimulates and integrates research activities. I can only wish that the periodical had been available when I was working on my dissertation and struggling to get hold of the literature on the subject. Unfortunately, it was not possible to introduce all the most interesting latest works on the theory of the comical into the main text for which I apologize to both their authors and my readers.*

Another change which needs some explanation is the omittance of the last chapter of the original version entitled "The Controversy about Socialist Satire" which presented mainly the Soviet discussions on the role of satire in the Communist countries. In terms of structure this part made an annex to the work and did not contribute theoretically to its conclusions. At present it is only a sui generis *historical curiosity. Its most relevant ideas have been incorporated into Part III of the present book.*

One cannot exhaust the problematic potential of the theory of the comical on two hundred or so pages. Therefore the present attempt to construct a theory of the comical does not, and cannot, provide a fully comprehensive theory. What I have rather been after is a theoretical sketch whose elements are: a) the

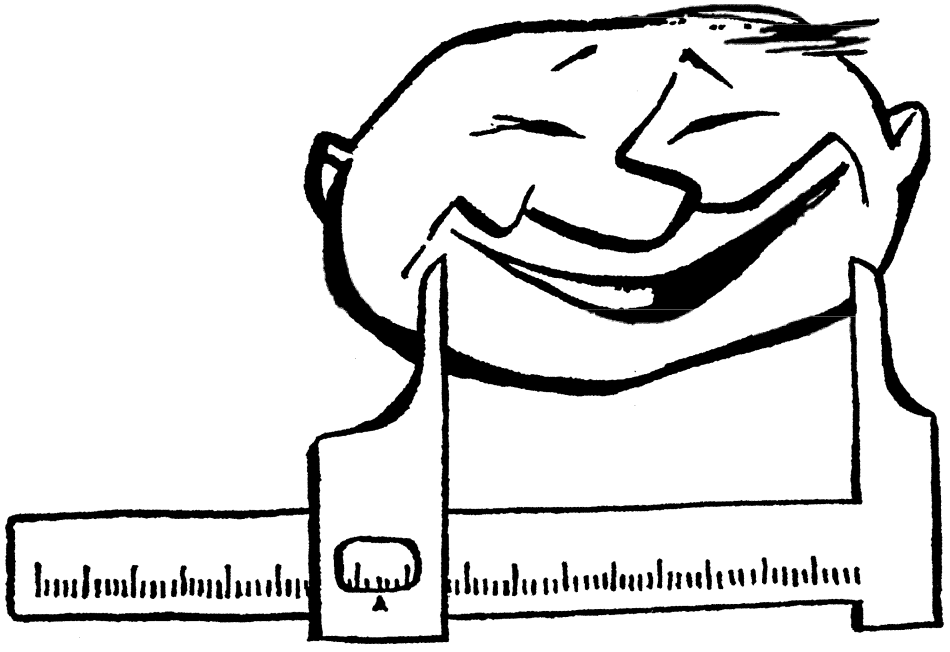
discussion and classification of some of the theories of the comical, b) the choice and defence of one of them or the proposal of a new one, c) a systematic discussion of more important techniques of evoking the experience of the comical, d) the characteristics and classification of the major forms of the comical and the major forms of artistic production connected with the comical, and e) the characteristics of the social role of the comical. The points mentioned have been reflected in the structure of the work with a modification such that the defence of the conception chosen will be carried out not only in Part I but also in Parts II and III.

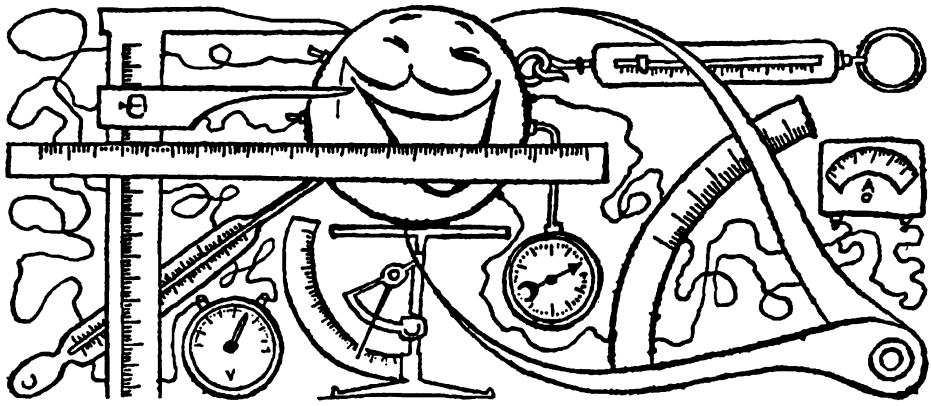
Since the work falls generally into the category of aesthetics, it does not concentrate specifically upon a single kind of art and, furthermore, necessarily ignores a number of detailed questions which would not have been omitted in, say, a highly specialized work on the theory of literature. When talking about the artistic forms of the comical I have drawn examples from the realms of film, theatre, literature and painting, with the emphasis on the first three, for it seems that in these forms the manifestations of the comical are at their most intense and diverse.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Series Editors Dr Lynne Broughton and Professor Jan Srzednicki for their initiative to publish the book in English, to Mr Szymon Kobyliński for excellent illustrations, and to Dr Marek Janiak who undertook the task of translating the work into English and helped me with his comments and suggestions in modernizing the contents. I am also indebted to Książka i Wiedza Publishers, *the copyright holder to the Polish original of* The Comical, *for their kind assent to transfer the copyright to* Kluwer Academic Publishers. *The translator is particularly indebted to Dr Lynne Broughton who took pains to correct the text of the translation.*

Part I

Defining the Comical





The comical is one of the most intricate and multifarious forms of the aesthetic. Semantically, the term refers not only to some of the natural events, objects and the relations that exist among them, which exhibit no intention of evoking the experiences of the comical, but relates also to a specific kind of creative activity (to be found both in art and in everyday life) in which specific configurations of events or specific conceptual or lexical systems are created in order to evoke experiences of a specific order. Finally, the comical has been associated with a particular kind of experiences.[1]

Laughter is indeed the most common and perspicuous effect of the comical. Yet it cannot suffice as the sole criterion of distinguishing the phenomena or experiences exhibiting a comical character among other classes of phenomena and experiences. Laughter is not tied up with the experience of the comical only and the comical does not at all times produce laughter. The reasons why we laugh may have nothing to do with the comical. We may laugh for purely physiological causes such as a shivering reaction to piercing cold or because we get hysterical or because our diaphragm has been damaged or simply because we happen to be ticklish. Laughter may also express our delight in living, a good frame of mind and enjoyment. Therefore we should necessarily draw the distinction between laughter as a physiological phenomenon and laughter as an aesthetic phenomenon.[2] Since there is no unanimity here we shall start our discussion of the phenomenon of the com-

ical with working out provisional definitions of such notions as the comical and the ludicrous.

For George Hegel and Vissarion Belinsky[3] the comical represents a higher and more refined instance of the ludicrous. Belinsky's view has been taken over by a Soviet aesthetician Yuri Borev[4], for whom the comical, as "a beautiful sister of the ludicrous", is the ludicrous aspect of the socially relevant phenomena which evoke socially dyed laughter. A distinction such as this is far from being adequate and justified, more so since Borev himself seems to get into trouble with it. He is well aware that not all the phenomena which evoke the feeling of the comical fit into his formula and therefore introduces the concept of the "elementary forms of the comical" which occupy the middle ground between the comical, in the strict meaning of the term, and the ludicrous.

A similar position has been taken by another Soviet aesthetician Avner Zis who holds that "the comical is always ludicrous. Yet the comical is ludicrous only when by means of an external form it articulates the meaning, or the hidden nature, of an evaluated phenomenon from the point of view of a given aesthetic ideal"[5]. If laughter neither helps uncover the meaning of the work nor enhances its idea but rather distracts the recipient from the main theme of the comedy, then what happens is that the comical is being substituted by an ordinary sort of the ludicrous. Zis goes even further than that and claims that mixing the comical and the ludicrous actually diminishes the artistic merit of a given work. Thus he obviously divorces the comical from farce, from the performance of a circus clown or from the comical so characteristic of many vaudevilles and operettas (Zis mentions Imre Kalman's operettas as an example of a genre in which the comical lost its social significance) since laughter evoked by such works not always "reveals the meaning of the ridiculed phenomenon, provides it with an appropriate artistic and ideological evaluation and consolidates the ideal."

Contrary to Borev and Zis for whom the comical is always ludicrous and the ludicrous not always comical, Moysey Kagan[6] claims that the comical is not always ludicrous. He points out that, for example, some artistic forms of

satire (itself one of the most important instances of the comical) are not always ludicrous. Instead of making people laugh, the satire of Maxim Gorky's lampoons, of Vladimir Mayakovsky's poems or of Goya's drawings make them feel repugnance, disgust, contempt, or anger.

Indeed, not always does satire move one to laughter, simply because satire does not embrace all of the instances of the comical. (We shall come back to this problem in Part III.) It seems that distinguishing, and in a number of cases even juxtaposing, the concepts of "the comical" and "the ludicrous" is not necessary. I am far from negating that there are no socially important manifestations of the comical and that, perhaps, its forms which are socially involved are of a "higher" and more "distinguished" significance than others, but I am also convinced that there are no good reasons to consider this form of the comical to be the only legitimate one and to classify the remaining ones as only ludicrous. Such a distinction may only lead to a further terminological confusion in the already very confused language concerning the comical, more so since the aesthetic experience evoked by the phenomena which are both ludicrous and socially important does not differ substantially from the experiences caused by the phenomena which are ludicrous but at the same time display no clear social significance.

There have been many proposals concerning the distinction between these two notions. B. Zawadzki sees the ludicrous as a property of the objects which evoke the comical and treats it in terms of a mental act[7], while for J. Trzynadlowski the comical is a feature of some of the real objects to which we subjectively react with humour.[8]

Yet another distinction between the comical and the ludicrous was given by A. Zeissing[9] and T. Peiper[10] who claimed that as a phenomenon the comical appears only in art, whereas the ludicrous appears outside art. Ellie Aubouin goes along the same line claiming that any person may be ludicrous but only some among us are comical[11]. Only those phenomena are comical which are produced with an intention of evoking the experiences of the comical. Thus the comical has to do with specific abilities, or with art taken in its broad meaning. For Z. Lissa[12], J. Kleiner[13], J. Krzyżanowski[14], W. Wit-

wicki[15], and Marie Collins-Swabey[16], the notions of the comical and the ludicrous are synonymous, although at times the word "ludicrous" gets a different treatment than the word "comical". We say that something is ludicrous when it is absurd or nonsensical, yet stops short of moving us towards experiencing the comical. We say, for example, that "It's simply ludicrous to learn to play the violin when you are seventy." Yet it is difficult to draw a line between those phenomena which are ludicrous without being comical and those which fit into both categories. So there is a good reason for using the terms interchangeably, particularly since the majority of the theorists of the comical use them synonymously, and even those who suggest that a distinction between them is in order are not able to go along with observing the difference themselves.

As a phenomenon, the comical seems to be neither exclusively objective nor, as Zawadzki suggests, exclusively subjective (the mental act theory). In order to occur, the experience of the comical obviously requires some external stimuli. However, whether the experience actually takes place depends also on such factors as the attitude and the personality of the subject, his sense of the comical, his mood, etc.

In order to avoid terminological confusions, however, one should distinguish clearly between the objective phenomenon of the comical understood in terms of objective properties of some of the real phenomena and the experiences of the comical.

Two factors determined the order in which the theories of the comical will be discussed: their chronology and the degree of their family relationship. In the case when strict observance of chronology could separate the theories whose contents and interrelations were very close, we shall abandon the principle of chronology. However, the principle will be strictly observed while discussing the work of particular representatives of a given theory.

The theories shall be classified on the basis of their essential idea. A theory shall be included in a given group if it shares its basic motif. Obviously the

groups of theories thus distinguished will display many common characteristics and will refer to each other.

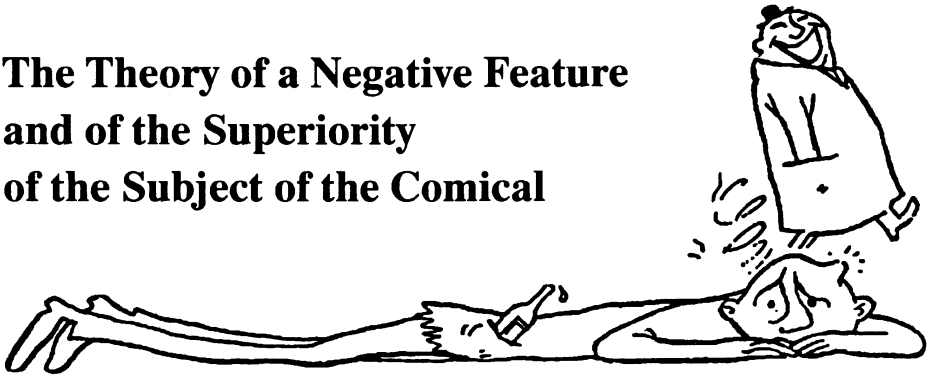
There are two basic groups of theories: the theories of a single major motif which overshadows the other ones which either stem from the major motif or complement it, and the theories of crossed motifs none of which can be distinguished as the major one.

It seems that positive and roughly univocal formulae of the comical may be principally divided into six groups:

1. the theory of the negative feature of the comical object or, psychologically speaking, the theory of the superiority of the experience of the comical over the object of the experience,
2. the theory of degradation,
3. the theory of contrast,
4. the theory of incongruity,
5. the theory of deviation from a norm,
6. the theories of mixed motifs.[17]

The theories may be further classified as either objectivist, subjectivist or relational depending on whether a given theory tries to locate the essence of the comical within the objective order or to find it in the peculiarities of the experiences related to the comical or, finally, to discover it in the relations between the objects of perception and the subject of perception. It is relatively easy to distinguish the theories with the prevailing objectivist tendency from the ones which are subjectively and psychologically oriented. Doubts arise however when an attempt is made to draw a distinction between the objectivists and the subjectivists on the one hand and the relationists on the other since some elements of relationism may be found in (some of) the conceptions of both objectivists (e.g. Aristotle or Borev) and subjectivists (e.g. Hobbes or Freud). However, to be classified as relationist, a given conception will have to manifest fully crystallized features of relationism.

The Theory of a Negative Feature and of the Superiority of the Subject of the Comical



Aristotle's Objectivism

The theories which belong to the first group originated in the ideas of Aristotle who in his *Poetics* seems to have been the first ever to attempt defining the ludicrous. He sees as ludicrous such negative features of mind and body as ugliness, various deformities or moral evil which nonetheless are not very harmful and painful. The ludicrous "consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive" such as the comical mask. Comedy is "an imitation of characters of a lower type - not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly."[18] Aristotle does not explain, however, for whom the repugnant and ugly features of the comical object should remain harmless and who should not suffer because of them.

Theoretically, the negative features may or may not cause harm and suffering to either the subject of the experience of the comical or to its object. If Aristotle, then, has in mind the subject of the experience of the comical (be it an individual, a group of people or the society as a whole), his definition of the comical will exclude satirical comedies which as such refer to things which the subject receives as harmful and which often make him suffer. Think, for example, of some of Aristophanes' comedies, which must have been known to Aristotle. And there are also reservations to be made if the harmless character of the comical is to concern the object. Sometimes someone is

ludicrous just because he suffers a painful loss, such as for example a betrayed husband who thinks that his wife is an angel, or a denounced bigot and hypocrite or a mean social climber who now suffers unpleasant consequences of his behaviour.

Aristotle's definition of the comical, though sufficient to explain some instances of the comical, is, however, too narrow. It does not cover complex forms of the comical in which laughter is mixed with sympathy or anger. Comical situations and characters may also be harmful and painful. Laughter resulting from the experience of the comical may be malicious and aggressive. Still another kind of the comical may be called "laughter through the tears".

At the same time Aristotle's definition is too broad. For example, ugly handwriting or spelling mistakes do not have to lead to suffering and cause any greater harm, and yet not always do they become a source of the experience of the comical.

Subjectivism of Hobbes and Stendhal

A similar theory to Aristotle's was proposed by Thomas Hobbes. He defines the feeling of the ludicrous in terms of a sudden sensation of superiority and complacence which arises when one unexpectedly realizes his supremacy over someone who has behaved out of tune or otherwise manifested his inferiority.[19]

Contrary to Aristotle whose characterisation of the comical is done mainly in objective terms, Hobbes analyzed the phenomenon of the ludicrous in terms of subjective experiences. Thus he became a forerunner of the psychological theories of the comical popular in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Hobbes was also the first to remark that surprise plays an important role in the experience of the comical. He pointed out that the manner in which we become aware of our superiority over the comical object contains an element of suddenness and unexpectedness which results in an unexpected satisfaction and delight which find their expression in laughter.

The feeling of superiority or supremacy over a comical object in the subject of the experience of the comical is indeed common to some of the comical phenomena. Hobbes's conception, therefore, does offer some explanation as to why their subject may find the experiences of the comical pleasant.

Hobbes's definition is broader than that of Aristotle. The extent of Hobbes's notion of the comical is additionally limited by his reservation that the subject's superiority over the object must be realized suddenly and unexpectedly. It must certainly be a common experience to any sportsman to have suddenly and unexpectedly realized his superiority over his rival, but this unquestionably pleasant and joyful experience does not necessarily have anything to do with the comical.

Hobbes's conception, however, is not only too broad; it is also too narrow in that it does not cover all comical phenomena. It holds valid for the majority of cases of a comical character provided that the notion of superiority retains its broad definition, but it accounts neither for many comical situations which involve no particular object of ridicule nor for the majority of jokes which are but one of the manifestations of verbal comedy. To whom shall we feel superior over if the joke does not make fun of any person? Shall we feel superior to the author of the joke or to its teller? Most likely this is not the case. Or is it to ourselves that we feel superior simply because there was a second when we did not catch the gist of the joke? The answer again is no, since the quicker we are in comprehending the joke, the better. Not only is a slowed-down reaction not a condition of experiencing the comical, but actually it weakens the experience or even blocks its occurrence altogether. Thus we seem to laugh at the joke itself which shows no traces of ridicule or aggressiveness and which contains, for example, a surprising, paradoxical yet accurate, observation. We may, then, experience only a cognitive "self-complacency" or a feeling of satisfaction that we have understood the joke so quickly, yet all this does not have to involve any form of superiority of the author of a successful joke or its teller over someone who behaved improperly or otherwise showed his inferiority. Neither can other people who have not comprehended the

joke be considered inferior; if they are, the satisfaction and the feeling of superiority we derive from this is neither a necessary condition nor an element of the experience of the comical. On the contrary, the comical appeals to us the more so if we share the company of people whose sense of the comical is highly developed and whose reactions to the comical are strong. Laughter provoked by the experience of the comical is infectious and our own experiences become fuller and more intensive if we can hear the laughter of the others. This is one of the reasons why many television comedy programmes have laughter of the audience in the background; it is meant not only to help the performers but to enhance the viewers' experience of the comical as well.

Hobbes's conception of the comical became quite popular. One of Hobbes's followers was Stendhal who was looking for compact and sufficient theory of the comical and who made an attempt to define the practically applicable principles governing the creation of successful comedies.

For Stendhal the essence of the comical lies in an unexpected and very clear awareness of our superiority over another person. Laughter refers to our self-esteem[20].

However, Stendhal points out that laughter is a delicate phenomenon and that the feeling of superiority over another human being may be very easily destroyed and adds that the absence of the smallest condition may rid even the most ludicrous thing of its effect and block the appearance of laughter altogether. The experience of the comical may take place only if the behaviour of another human being and his condition do not provoke strong emotions such as compassion, indignation, or anxiety.

For Stendhal the occurrence of laughter is blocked by both very strong feelings and passions and an intensive intellectual activity. It is not difficult to note that Stendhal's idea of the comical is even more subjectivist than Hobbes's. Stendhal talks solely about the experience of the comical and about the subjective conditions which must be met if the experience is ever to take place.

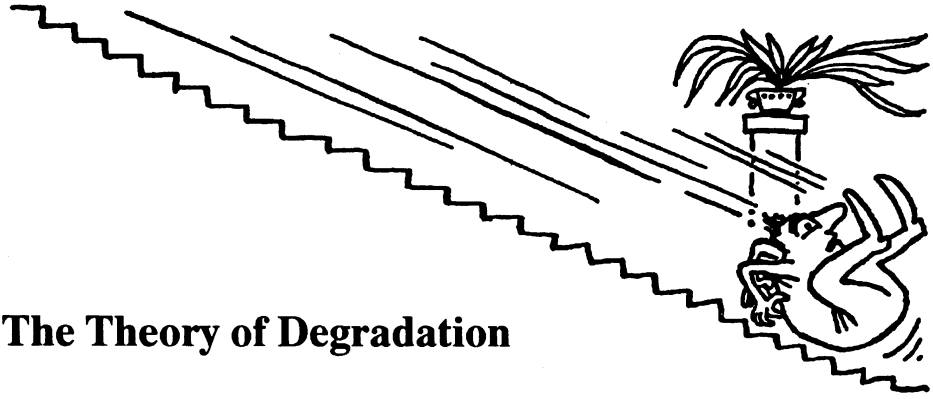
Stendhal made a considerable contribution to the theory of the comical by expanding the list of emotions which, when felt towards the object of percep-

tion, block the experience of the comical, and including among them not only compassion and the feeling of pity (included already by Hobbes) but the emotions of indignation, anxiety, as well as other kinds of strong feelings and passions which he left unmentioned. The same reasons, however, which made Hobbes's conception unsatisfactory hold valid for Stendhal, too.

Überhorst's Relationism

Hobbes's views inspired also Karl Überhorst who attempted to marry Aristotle's objectivism and Hobbes's psychologism. For Überhorst the comical is based on a negative feature or a defect. The subject, at least in his own opinion, should be free from the defect which also should not make an excessively unpleasant impression. If these conditions are fulfilled, the subject will experience the comical. An important element of the experience of the comical is the subject's sense of his own superiority[21].

An advantage of Überhorst's theory lies in its attempt to grasp the essence of the comical in the perspective of both the object and the subject. Yet the requirement that the subject must be free from any defect as the condition of the experience of the comical treated as a necessary condition of any experience of this kind is unacceptable. When experiencing the comical we rarely reflect upon whether we possess the feature which evokes the experience or not, and, moreover, we may be well aware that we are not free from defects or shortcomings which are comical for us, as when we laugh at someone who skates or dances very poorly even though we are not at all better than him in this respect.



The Theory of Degradation

Alexander Bain: A Psychological Theory of the Comical

The theory of degradation proposed by a nineteenth-century British psychologist Alexander Bain came very close to the positions represented earlier by Aristotle and Hobbes. Bain saw the comical as the degradation of the sublime and the serious to the paltry and the low. He claimed that the comical results from degrading a serious person or an affair in circumstances which do not produce any other strong emotion.[22]

An act of degrading someone, which produces no strong emotions of some other kind, evokes in us the feelings of power and superiority and at times relieves us unexpectedly from embarrassment resulting from the solemnity of an occasion. Relief such as this finds expression in, and results in, an outburst of hilarity. Contrary to Hobbes, Bain does not treat every experience of the comical as connected with the feeling of superiority of the subject of the comical over its object and declares that the occurrence of the feeling of the comical becomes difficult and even impossible when the act of degrading a person evokes in the subject a strong emotion of another sort. Bain is quite successful in explaining some cases of the comical, yet his theory is too narrow to account for other occurrences of the comical and cannot be accepted as sufficient. Nor does the comical object have to be ugly, nonsensical or degraded, nor, on the contrary, does it have to be important, sublime or serious. Falstaff, Shveik, Chaplin, Scapen or Figaro do make us laugh even

though they were not first characters of any importance to be later degraded and stripped of power.

Bain's theory had a very keen supporter in a prominent Polish psychologist Władysław Witwicki. Since Witwicki's views have much in common with other theories we shall discuss them when talking about the theories of mixed motifs.

Stern's Relationism

The theory of degradation was also accepted by Alfred Stern who put forth an axiological theory of the comical in his *Philosophie du rire et des pluers.* He interpreted laughter in terms of a reaction to the degradation of values. Laughter is an instinctive, non-verbal judgement of a negative value which has to do with a degradation of values.[23] Contrary to Bain, whose conception of the comical remains psychological, Stern openly declares himself to be a relationist. His relationism results naturally from his conception of values. The comical is a negative value, and values are not absolute essences existing independently of the knowing and evaluating subject but exist as relationships between the objects and the subject which evaluates them. Inequality between objects does not stem from things themselves but results from the relations obtaining between things and the subject. Only the relation of a thing to a human being may reveal its value. The value of a thing is nothing but its capacity to evoke human desires and to satisfy them. The relational character of values, however, is not identical with making them subjective.

Stern claims that there is comedy in all those occasions and kinds of behaviour which either focus our attention on what is valuable or worthless or change its direction from those values which are accepted for themselves to values which are only instrumental. The cases mentioned have to do with the degradation of values which provokes laughter as an instinctive judgement of a negative value. However, laughter is not only a passive reaction to the degradation of values. There are cases when our laughter is meant to degrade vales and indeed does degrade them. When we laugh at a thing which is not ludicrous we are trying to degrade its intellectual, moral, aesthetic, or

economic values. For Stern, laughter is capable of killing values axiologically[24]. It becomes obvious that for Stern only a human being can be comical. Values are a purely human phenomenon and therefore only a human being may be axiologically degraded. Stern's theory gives also a plausible explanation of why a person whom we laugh at is angry at us. The axiologial meaning hidden in laughter is instinctively comprehended by the people who sense that laughter is dangerous for the axiological dimension of human existence.

Interpreting laughter in psycho-physiological terms Stern followed Herbert Spencer and claimed that laughter discharges an excessive amount of nervous energy[25].

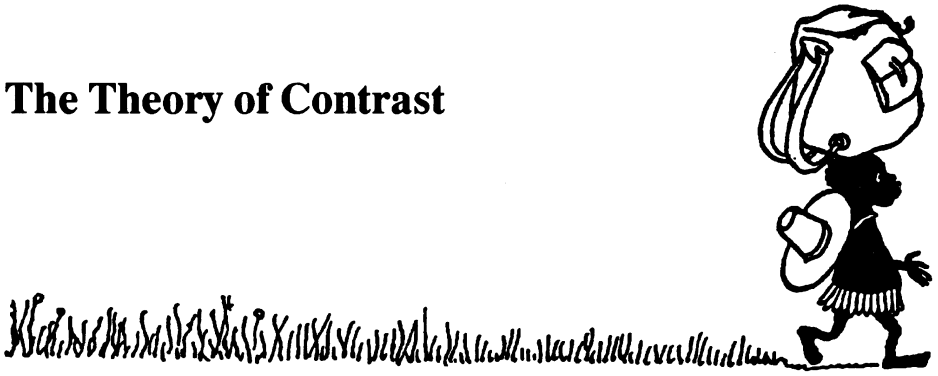
At present the theory of degradation is represented by Roger Scruton. Pointing to the fact that although everybody likes to laugh nobody likes to be laughed at,[26] Scruton claims that "laughter de-values its object in the subject's eyes" and that the process of de-valuing is "integral to laughter". The axiological degradation is "neither a precondition of amusement nor the result of it. It is, rather, the amusement itself." According to Scruton, amusement may be described as a kind of "attentive demolition."[27] At the same time Scruton makes it clear that he does not adhere to the theory of superiority: "To lower the object is not necessarily to rise the subject; it might be to lower both together."[28] Simultaneous lowering of both happens in some kinds of irony. Another reason why Scruton does not accept the theory of superiority is that like the theory of the relief from restraint (Freud and others) it attempts to find "the meaning of humour in what it does to the subject, rather than in how it represents the object", whereas the importance of humour is that it directs our attention outwards.[29]

Scruton's position, however, is not identical with that of Stern. It also differs from most of the theories of the comical which stress the social role of the ridicule in that for Scruton the other important feature of amusement is that it makes a specific form of aesthetic interest. Amusement is "a mode of enjoying an object 'for its own sake' ... a mode of reflective attention to an object"[30] which neither serves the purpose of discovery nor motivates to action.

Even though we admit that Stern's and Scruton's theories provide an accurate characterisation of some of the forms of the comical, they cannot be accepted as universal. Not every laughter having to do with the comical is ridicule which ends up in an axiological degradation of its object. It seems that one can argue that some forms of humour do not axiologically degrade their objects and do not lower their value. I shall return to this point when characterizing various forms of the comical.

Another reason why Scruton rejects the traditional theories of the comical is that the basic concepts they employ (the notion of incongruity among them) are vague. Yet this argument can easily be turned against Scruton's own notions such as "attentive demolition" or "de-valuing" which are also far from clear and precise.

The Theory of Contrast



Subjectivist Versions of the Theory of Contrast[31]

The theory of unfulfilled expectations. One of the philosophers whose views on the comical inspired a great number of aestheticians and psychologists dealing with the problem of the comical was Immanuel Kant. For Kant laughter "is an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing."[32] We expected something utterly different to happen from what had suddenly happened, but it becomes a pleasant surprise which gives us delight through the change of sensations.

Again, we shall repeat some of the reservations. Firstly, Kant's theory is too broad in that there are cases when a tense expectation transforming suddenly into nothingness produces the feeling of relief and relaxation which does not have to do with the comical. Let us consider some examples:

a) John has again failed to do his homework and the teacher has unexpectedly started the revision of the material by asking the pupils from the list. If John gets an unsatisfactory mark he might not be able to take his A levels. When his tension reaches its peak, the teacher suddenly finishes the lesson.

b) Mr Smith has fallen critically ill. His doctor and his family expect that his state will get worse when all of a sudden he recovers.

Secondly, Kant's definition of the comical is at the same time too narrow, since there are instances of the comical which not only involve no reduction of strained expectations into nothing but simply involve no expectation com-

ponent at all. There are people who find hearty pleasure in watching the same theatre or film comedies or in hearing the same anecdotes over and over again and yet the knowledge of "what's going to happen next" makes no obstacle to their experience of the comic.

Views similar to Kant's are to be found in Herbert Spencer for whom laughter occurs naturally when our consciousness moves suddenly from things great to things small, i.e. when there is what we call substituting incongruity.[33]

Spencer did not interpret the movement from things great to things small in terms of degradation of the great and the powerful to the small and the weak. What he had in mind were mental states. A "great" mental act absorbs more mental energy than a "small" one. When human consciousness moves from the "great" state to the "small" one, the movement produces a surplus of "mental energy" which finds its discharge in laughter.

The suggestion that the discharge of a surplus of "mental energy" makes the most essential source of laughter is Spencer's important contribution to our understanding of the comical. It has been accepted and developed further by many theorists of the comical, Sigmund Freud and Anatoly Lunacharsky among them.

Lipps's Theory. The theories of Kant and Spencer influenced the views of a German aesthetician and psychologist Theodor Lipps who presented his ideas in his fundamental work devoted to this question: *Komik und Humor*[34]. Lipps holds that the phenomenon of the comical occurs when an expected value capable of arresting our attention is suddenly substituted by some other value which is out of gear with the present situation and is therefore of minor importance at the moment. Initially the value is of interest to us for to some extent it pretends to be the value we expect; soon, however, we unmask its real nature.

Lipps recalls here the "law of mental congestion" (*das Gesetz der psychischen Stauung*) which is the prerequisite of any astonishment and interest. Substituting one value for another evokes interest, attracts the attention and generally concentrates the "mental energy" creating "mental congestion".

When the puzzle is solved, a surplus of disinterested "mental energy" is produced which evokes the feelings of joy and laughter. Laughter then is a discharge of accumulated and now superfluous "mental energy".

Contrary to Kant and Spencer, Lipps does not emphasize the thesis that the comical consists in the transition from "something great" to "something small". Although he does admit that the feeling of the comical arises when a thing which is, or seems to be, meaningful loses the meaning or the capacity to make an impression[35] or when something small which simulates being great appears eventually to be nothing at all, he sees as important and great those things which are capable of arresting our attention and catching our interest. What Lipps seems to have in mind here is not so much the actual transition from the great to the small as the transition from what is appropriate in the given situation and therefore interesting for us at the given moment to what is out of place and is therefore indifferent to us. The thing which is out of place is in this sense indeed too "small" when compared with its purpose.

Unlike Kant and Spencer, Lipps managed to preserve the broader meaning of the definition of the comical. Contrary to Kant Lipps does not highlight surprise as the major source of the comical. The element of surprise counts as one among various other methods of achieving comical effects.

Lipps's book contains lengthy discussions of other theories of the comical. Presenting arguments against the theories of the superiority of the subject of the experience of the comical over its object, Lipps holds that the talk of the superiority in the comical experience makes sense only when superiority is taken to mean a cognitive satisfaction which results from solving a momentary puzzle. Yet the moment in question does not make the constitutive and necessary ingredient of the experience of the comical but comes only as a side effect.

Lipps's book abounds in many interesting and often accurate observations on the nature of the comical, yet altogether they do not add up to a theory of the comical which would be general enough to account for all comical phenomena without including things which have nothing to do with the comical. Lipps's theory applies almost exclusively to comical situations and jokes,

virtually leaving out comical characters. So often do we know someone's weaknesses and the comical features of his or her personality and yet they do not cease to amuse us. On the other hand, an ordinary disappointment having nothing in common with the comical displays all those features which Lipps accepted as constitutive for the phenomenon of the comical. Let us consider an example or two:

a) We receive a letter which we take to be the one we have been expecting for a long time and which supposedly contains a message of great value for us. The colour of the envelope, the manner of address etc. assure us of that and increase our enthrallment. However, when we open the letter it appears to be an insignificant and trivial note from someone else. Thus we experience an unpleasant disappointment in which there are no comical elements involved.

b) We attend a highly publicized concert and expect a magnificent performance. The beginning is indeed very promising and our involvement increases but as the performance develops it turns out to be quite boring. Our initial pleasure disappears completely.

Lipps's theory found many adherents and followers. Among its Polish supporters who took the Lippsian approach to be the most flawless of all hitherto existing theories were I. Chrzanowski[36] and K. Irzykowski[37].

The motif of unfulfilled expectations is not the only strain in Lipps's theory. There is another, though very much related, motif to be found there which may be labelled the theory of disguise. Its basic claim is that the comical appears whenever something weak and small disguises itself as the powerful and the monumental or someone's power, greatness, and significance appear to be a disguise covering weakness and nothingness.

Since the motif of disguise rarely occurs in its pure and independent form, it will not be treated as a separate theory; however, the motif is a recurrent component of the theories of the comical, particularly the theories of contrast and incongruity. It gives an accurate explanation of some cases of the comical, yet it is definitely too narrow.

Hoffding's Theory. The theory of contrast was also supported by a Danish psychologist Harold Hoffding. He sees contrast as the basis of the forms of the comical, in other words contrast is the essence of the comical in general. In his opinion the contrast which defines the essence of the comical results from an abrupt clash of two thoughts or impressions both of which produce their own emotion but the other one destroys what the first one has created.[38]

Hoffding's most valuable contribution to our understanding of the comical is his acceptance of contrast as the cornerstone of all comical phenomena; however, it does not suffice as such and therefore it can be only a starting point for further considerations. Hoffding had also proposed a more detailed formula, saying that the common feature of all comedy consists in the clumsy and the decrepit appearing all of a sudden in their nothingness through the contrast with a superior power. The comical effect takes place when we have been for a while taken in, duped, deceived, assured or kept in an anxious expectation and suddenly all that either disappears into nothingness or turns into its opposite.[39]

The first part of Hoffding's formula is both vague and difficult to vindicate. Indisputably the appearance of the decrepit through the contrast with a superior power is not a *common* feature of all comical phenomena. The remaining part of the formula (in which Hoffding clearly makes use of the motif of disguise) does explain some of the occurrences of the comical, but fails to distinguish them sufficiently enough from the phenomena which are somehow related to, but which actually have nothing to do with, the comical.

The character of the theories proposed by Spencer, Lipps and Hoffding is overtly psychological. They concentrate almost exclusively on the experiences of the subject of the comical and in most cases see them as its origin and the essence. This is probably one of the reasons for the failure of these theories which as a rule abstain from analyzing the structure of the objects of the comical.

The Theories of Contrast: An Objectivist Approach

The one-sidedness of the psychological approach among the theories of contrast has been balanced by the theories proposed by such theorists of

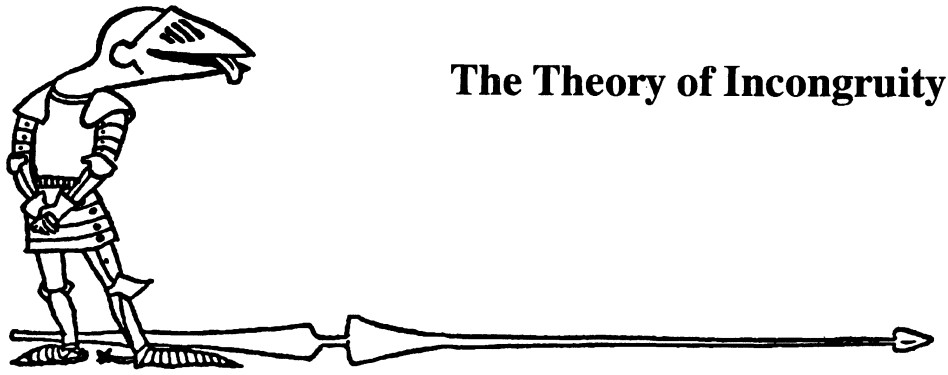
literature as Julian Krzyżanowski and Genady Pospelov. Krzyżanowski's approach is probably the most comprehensive attempt at a definition of the sources of the comical among all the theories of contrast, although he does not aspire to give an explication of all cases of the comical. What he does is to examine the particular forms of the comical in literature.

According to Krzyżanowski, the comical is produced by "an extraordinary and startling contrast of the properties in the phenomenon which produces laughter, the contrast of a rather ephemeral, passing and momentary nature which astonishes the observer unexpectedly yet not too suddenly and therefore produces a pleasant reaction which does not shock him mentally."[40]

Krzyżanowski's formula may be taken as the starting point for a more detailed analysis of particular forms of the comical; nevertheless, what unnecessarily circumscribes it is the restriction that the comical contrast is "of a rather ephemeral and passing nature". Yet the comicality of a character consists, among others, in some regular contrasts and incongruities.

A Soviet theorist of literature G. Pospelov has attempted to build up a theory of the comical using the motif of disguise. "When the people of authority, power, significance, and respect appear to be hollow and devoid of values, they become objects of ridicule."[41]

It is easy to notice that the motifs of unfulfilled expectations and disguise present only slight variations on the concept of contrast. That explains why the theories of unfulfilled expectations and disguise have been classified as forms of the theory of contrast. The former involve the contrast between the mental states of expectation and the fact of their unfulfillment, the latter involve the contrast between the external shape or pretensions of a phenomenon and its real value.



The Theory of Incongruity

The theories of incongruity were launched by the German philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer and George Hegel. Hegel was an objectivist. Schopenhauer's conception, on the other hand, is relationist and therefore it will be discussed later on.

Objectivist Forms of the Theory of Incongruity

Hegel sees the essence of the comical in the "contrast between what is essential and its appearance, the object and its instrument, ... in virtue of which the appearance is absolutely cancelled, and the end is stultified in its realization."[42] An example of such a destructive means is parsimony where the collection of money which should make life easy and pleasant turns into incongruity.

Hegel very clearly and strongly emphasizes the objective character of the comical. He says that we cannot really laugh at something which does not itself contain the ludicrous. Since the comical consists in showing how a human being or an object decompose internally, the comical is shallow and unjustified when the object as such is not in itself its own contradiction.[43]

Franz Vischer, a Hegelian, holds that the comical is similar to the sublime in that the reason for the experience of the comical lies in the incongruity between content and form, or between the idea and the appearance of a phenomenon. If the incongruity involves more of the idea the sublime occurs;

if the appearance gains superiority over the idea and distorts it, the phenomenon becomes comic.[44]

One of the proponents of Vischer's formula was Nicolai Chernyshevsky. Interpreting Vischer's conception he saw as the comical "poverty and inner emptiness covered with an external shape which pretends to have content and real significance."[45] However, Chernyshevsky is well aware that the formula is too narrow and sees Vischer's error in that he juxtaposes the comical and the sublime only without further juxtaposing the comical and the beautiful, a move which leaves out "comic ugliness." In his unfinished work *Vozvyshennoye i komiczeskoye* he repeats Vischer's formula yet at the same time goes beyond its limits more decisively (a fact which goes unnoticed for some of Chernyshevsky's Soviet interpreters). He writes there that "the sphere of the comical comprises all that is harmlessly absurd and that 'ugliness' (*bezobraznoye*) is the source and the essence of the comic." But he qualifies his thesis maintaining that ugliness is comical only when it pretends to be beautiful (this is when it becomes absurd as a result of the incongruity occurring between its pretensions and its real capabilities) without evoking the feeling of fear. The experience of the comical consists of a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant feelings with the supremacy of the former. Unpleasant feelings are produced by ugliness, whereas the pleasant ones are evoked by the awareness of the sharpness of the mind which was able to disclose ugliness. Thus the experience of the comical makes the subject "realize his own value".[46] The formulae of the comical designed by Hegel, Vischer and Chernyshevsky are tenable only for some cases of the comical. For general definitions, however, they are too narrow as some examples might demonstrate.

The theory of incongruity has been particularly popular among Soviet aestheticians. Some of them openly follow Hegel and Chernyshevsky and claim that incongruity provides a basis for the comical which consists in an incongruity between the content (the essence) of a phenomenon and its perceptually accessible form and the supremacy of the latter over the former. We find a classic version of this conception in Elena Evnina.[47] Another Soviet theorist, Akov Elsberg, expresses a similar view holding that manifold forms

of the comical share one common element which may be defined as "the incongruity between the content or the essence of a given phenomenon and its form or its secondary, more or less external, features".[48] A similar position has been taken by Dmytri Nikolaev. In his interesting book on satire he keeps repeating that the source of the comical is always an incongruity between the content and the form of a phenomenon.[49] Avner Zis qualifies this statement saying that not every incongruity between content and form needs to be comical and adds that it acquires the comical character when the content is empty and valueless and the form is pretentious, simulating dignity and significance[50].

For Vladimir Ermilov, the author of excellent monographs on Chekov and Gogol, the incongruity between content and form of a phenomenon, "between external appeal and internal ugliness, between claims to significance and internal poverty", is only one of the types of comical incongruity.[51] Ermilov's account broadens the formula of the comical and seems to be more adequate. One will easily notice that Evnina's, Elsberg's, Nicolaev's and Zis's accounts are too narrow since they fail to cover a number of the comical phenomena. We might point to many examples of the comical which do not fall into the category of superiority of form over content. Moreover, not only must an insignificant and empty phenomenon of formal pomposity be comic; also the opposite case where an uninteresting and even meagre external shape conceals a fine and significant interior may present equally comical qualities. We find a good example of such a case in the characters of Socrates in Ludwik Hieronim Morstin's comedy *Xantipa's Apology*, and Esopus in Antero de Figueiredo's *Fox and Grapes*. Both examples prove that an ugly body of a badly dressed and oddly behaving individual may hide a most honest soul of a man of wisdom and genuine dignity.

The formula of the comical based upon incongruity has been also broadened by Leonid Timofeev. In his view, "The comical phenomena in life are the ones of internal incongruity in which one can notice incongruity with what they aspire to be, incongruity which diminishes their value".[52]

Timofeev's definition contains also some elements characteristic of the theories of "degradation". Either he does not take the source of the comical to lie exclusively in "internal incongruity" (he says that the incongruity between a factual capability and an outward aspiration or the inadequacy of the aim and the means designed for its accomplishment, as well as the incongruity between the premisses and the conclusions, are comical, too) or his notion of the "internal incongruity" has a very broad meaning. However, Timofeev's definition is both too broad and too narrow. Certainly not every internal incongruity which brings to the surface the worthlessness of a phenomenon must necessarily be comical, and definitely it is not the unique source of the experience of the comical.

Incongruity is taken to be the basis of the comical also by Borev who adds that the experience of the comical is greatly affected by the sudden and unanticipated manner in which the incongruity comes to the view. Borev is one of the few Soviet aestheticians who attempt to provide a fully sufficient definition of the comical. "In reality the comical is a socially relevant incongruity or incongruity (of aim and means, form and content, action and circumstances of an essence and its manifestation, ambitions of an individual and his real capacities, intentions and results, the low and the sublime, the beautiful and the hideous, the old and the new, etc.) which from the point of view of aesthetic ideals which reflect an objective level of the development of reality deserves to be criticized on emotional grounds (explaining, jocose ridicule, satirical exposure, etc.). The comical in art is a means to uncover the contradictions of reality and as such is an aesthetic form of critique".[53]

According to Borev, the comical is one of the objective aesthetic qualities. An aesthetic quality is the most broadly understood social significance of a phenomenon taken in relation to the progressive social development of humankind. Although Borev took pains to develop and explain this definition he was not able to overcome its excessive generality and abstract formulations and to reach to the core of aesthetic phenomena. But his not too fortunate definition of aesthetic quality contains a very important point for his theory of the comical. Borev speaks about the social nature of all aesthetic

phenomena, including the comical. "A phenomenon may be comical only by means of its social significance, and not through its natural, biological or physiological properties"[54]

Borev's considerations may lead to the conclusion that the comical is not a primary property of natural phenomena but is its secondary feature whose *reason d'etre* lies in that all phenomena are under the influence of social praxis. Natural phenomena become comical only when their natural form contains social substance, and has reference to human characters and relations. What follows from this is that not all laughter-producing phenomena are comic. The comical is simultaneously ludicrous, but not all the ludicrous must necessarily exhibit the comical quality.

A consistent defendant of the social nature and the objective character of the comical, by no means does Borev negate the importance of the subjective aspect of the comical. "Factually speaking the comical does not exist for someone lacking a sense of humour".[55] A sense of humour is a specific form of the aesthetic sensibility and has been moulded by the objective properties of the comical. The difference between the experience of the comical and the other kinds of aesthetic experiences lies in the fact that it is emotionally dyed by a critical attitude towards comical phenomena.

Borev connects the aesthetic delight of the experience of the comical and the feeling of superiority of the subject of the comical over its object, the cognitive function of the comical, and the subject's specific activity of contrasting the ridiculed phenomena with the aesthetic ideal.[56] He notices a similarity between the way the experience of the comical works and the mechanisms of fear and astonishment in that the important role is played by surprise and amazement. Laughter, however, always expresses joyous "fear" and joyous "astonishment". At the same time it is an aesthetic astonishment which remains in a reverse proportion to enchantment and veneration, "an astonishment with a minus sign".[57]

Borev's conception is first and foremost too narrow. However, this seems to be his premeditated choice since he intends to exclude from the definition of the comical those forms of the ludicrous which have no social significance

and do not aim to discredit and degrade. Another negative aspect of Borev's theory is his tendency to uncover some absolute and unconditional criteria of the comical. In his opinion the truly comical is what does not conform to the "real course of history" and what stands in contradiction with the "real destiny of life". A formula such as this is inoperative and cannot be applied to a whole lot of the comical phenomena in relation to which it is not only physically impossible but simply does not make much sense to check whether they stand in conformity or in contradiction to the "real course of history".[58]

Borev found a follower in a Ukrainian theorist Boris Minchin who claims that the comical finds its objective grounds in the contradictions of reality itself, and in the incongruity of the phenomena with the "progressive tendencies of social development" in particular. Minchin holds that history's stage is a place for wonderful comedies whose main protagonists are social relations, states and institutions which are outmoded but which refuse to leave the stage voluntarily. Their protagonists are also people who have lost the sense of the real and who feed on their past or illusions, and, finally, those whose course of action contradicts the logic of life circumstances. Those manifold forms of the comical share one common regularity in that their foundation is the "incongruity between old-fashioned, obsolete forms of life and the new, revolutionary forms of boundless perspectives of development".[59]

Not always do the old and the dying become comic. They acquire comicality when they try to transgress the objective laws of development and to preserve or restore their existence and authority.

On the one hand Minchin's conception quite adequately explains the comical character of some of the socially significant phenomena. On the other hand, however, it does not account for everyday comical circumstances, many forms of jokes, some comical features of character and the like. Another thing is that the case when the old undertakes a fight for the right to exist or even for its previous authority and glory does not have to be comical - it may equally well become tragic.

The theory of incongruity was accepted by M. Collins-Swabey who published her *Comic Laughter* in 1961. The basis of the comical is always some

human incongruity, contradiction or absurdity. The incongruity may be real or seeming but it should not be too significant and painful. The perception of the comical cannot be reduced to emotional and physiological reactions only since intellect necessarily has its own say in deciding what is worth laughing at. The disclosure of local contradictions due to the shrewdness of intellect makes the basis for the satisfaction felt while experiencing the comical. When we laugh at incongruities and absurdities we "reaffirm the supremacy of the logical world and the cogency of thought to grasp it."[60] Contrary to the "sociologically oriented" conceptions of Borev and Minchin, then, Collins-Swabey has produced a "logically oriented" variant of the theory of incongruity. However, her modification has not been very successful.

Arthur Schopenhauer seems to have been the first representative of relationism in the theory of incongruity. Schopenhauer enriched the theory of the comical with the notion of contradiction, or incongruity (*Inkongruenz*) which he introduced to define the origin of the experience of the comical. The incongruity occurs between the notion of an object and a real object which at first sight seems to correspond to the notion but which actually possesses only some features ascribed to it by the notion while some other of its qualities remain mutually exclusive with the features included in the notion which we want to apply to the object.[61] That is why apes seem comical to us at times: their similarity to people prompts us to compare an ape with a human being. At the same time, however, we are aware of the incongruity between the look of this animal and the concept of a human shape.

The strength of Schopenhauer's theory consists in the relationist account of the nature of the comical; its weakness lies in the speculative character of its statements. It cannot be fully accepted mainly because becoming aware of an erroneous juxtaposition of an object with a different notion on the basis of the similarity of some features, may be comical in some cases only. On the other hand Schopenhauer's formula is too narrow, too, and does not cover most cases of the comical.

This version of the theory of contradiction was subscribed to by Karol Lemcke: "We laugh candidly when reality and expectation, concept and ap-

pearance, do not meet and their incongruity emerges in a sudden and ludicrous manner."[62]

Lemcke holds that the solution of the conflict in a way which does not harm anybody is the essence of the comical and adds that the conflict should have an extraordinary character and appear suddenly. He gives some examples of comical incongruities such as ugliness which wants to be taken as beauty, or dullness aspiring to dignity and greatness, and the like.

One of the strong supporters of relationism among the representatives of the theory of incongruity is Moysey Kagan who openly says that the nature of the comical is both subjective and objective and that the comical arises as a result of a clash between reality and human ideals. This last aspect brings the comical near the phenomenon of the tragic which arises when the victory in the clash between ideal and reality goes to reality. "If, however, a conflict like that brings defeat to reality, if perceiving some phenomena in human life or representing them artistically we notice its ugliness, lowness, nothingness, vulgarity, in short - its anti-ideal character, and we ridicule this phenomenon, that is 'destroy' it with our derision, irony, sarcasm or simply with laughter, the phenomenon becomes comical."[63] Kagan writes further: "Independently of the emotional expression of the comical its aesthetic essence consists in a clash of the real and the ideal in which the real is negated, humiliated, judged, denounced, and criticized from the point of view of the ideal." Smile and laughter go together with the comical only because they often express a feeling of satisfaction at having spiritually won against what negates the ideals of a particular human being. The more dangerous the negated phenomenon for the ideal, the less comical it is. That is why Kagan agrees with Aristotle that we laugh at deficiencies and weaknesses of a human being only when "they pose no threat for himself and for other people, and do not seriously threaten society. If, on the contrary, we sense something hideous, abhorrent, horrible in the phenomenon negated, then a sarcastic attitude and its representation in art exclude a cheerful reaction with laughter."

Currently a relatonist version of the incongruity theory has been presented by Stefan Morawski for whom the comical is a subjective-objective

phenomenon. On the objective side the comical results from "a dialectical opposition between the two elements, one of them being a positive, substantial motif, and the other being negative, seeming, overcoming the other and ostensibly winning over it."[64]

Psychologically, the only condition of the comical is "to treat what has been ridiculed 'not in earnest'."[65] "Not in earnest" means here an absence of attachment to and respect for the value which laughter ridicules, or the feeling of valuelessness which it bares and attacks, or an acute awareness that the respected value which a person would like to realize fully and permanently cannot be realized. This condition emphasizes the difference between the tragic and the comical perspectives. Morawski is thus aware that his very general and abstract definition of comical incongruities may apply to the tragic as well. He holds that, indeed, the comical and the tragic concern the same antinomies of human existence. Contrary to the tragic, however, the comical restores "the proper measure for both facts and obligations. That is why one of its versions defends the present social code, a move which is impossible from the viewpoint of the tragic. ... Important differences stem from the fact that what the tragic perspective accepts as an anti-human triviality, the comical accepts as no less human than the most sublime aspirations. What makes an irremovable, univocal disagreement with the perplexity within man, with the order based on the two values of the bio-social and the ethico-transcendent, the comical treats ambiguously in terms of agreement and disagreement. In spite of its defeats the tragic keeps assuming that complete freedom may be achieved, while the comical does not oppose this lofty myth."[66]

The theory of incongruity enjoys its revival among the Anglo-Saxon aestheticians. Two of the works published recently seem particularly interesting in this respect, namely the articles by Michael Clark[67] and John S. Morreall.[68]

The scope of Clark's theory has been more restricted than the traditional theories of the comical which attempted to find its necessary and sufficient conditions. Clark does not suppose this task has ever been possible to realize. His point of departure is Schopenhauer's version of the theory of incon-

gruity with the difference that he does not identify incongruity with the ridiculous. Not all incongruities are amusing. Always, however, does incongruity appear in "the formal object of amusement." The perceived incongruity is thus a necessary condition of the comical. "Necessarily every object of amusement is perceived as incongruous just as every object of fear is necessarily believed to be dangerous or harmful."[69] However, humour appears only when the incongruity perceived makes a source of enjoyment for the subject perceiving for the perception's sake. "To be amused in the relevant sense of that word" means for Clark "to enjoy seeing or thinking of something as incongruous, where the incongruity is enjoyed at least partly for its own sake and is at least part of the reason for enjoyment."[70]

A similar version of the incongruity theory has been defended by John Morreall who holds that "humorous amusement" is "the enjoyment of incongruity", or, in different words, "the enjoyment of something which clashes with our mental patterns and expectations."[71] In Morreall's opinion the sense of humour consists in the ability to find delight in incongruities and is an ability unique to human beings differentiating them from other living creatures. Defining "amusement" as a reaction to incongruities Morreall compares it with other possible reactions to incongruities such as "negative emotions" and "puzzlement". He concludes that the ability to react with amusement to incongruities emerged only at a specific stage in human history together with "developing nonpractical perspectives and rationality".[72] In order to be capable of finding delight in incongruities, the subject of delight cannot be incessantly troubled by and oppressed with their practical consequences. Thus the sense of humour is a product of the evolution and has what Morreall calls "survival value": "Humour liberates us from practical and even theoretical concerns and lets us look at the world from a higher, less entangled perspective, as a kind of aesthetic field."[73]

The introduction of the concept of incongruity to the theory of the comical was not accepted unanimously. One of the reasons of the opposition was the fact that the concept of incongruity had a precise logical definition. Two propositions are contradictory,when one of them ascribes a given property to

an object while the other one simultaneously refuses to ascribe the same property to the same object under the same conditions.

It is obvious that the concept of incongruity thus interpreted is of no use in attempts to define the essence of the comical. The phenomenon of the comical cannot be reduced to contradictory propositions, even though reasoning replete with incongruity may produce the experience of the comical. Therefore Hoffding's objections to Soren Kierkegaard's use of the term "incongruity" to account for the origin and the nature of the comical are quite legitimate: "One should not mingle a real opposition of two emotions, one of them being strong enough to oust the other, with a logical contradiction of two thoughts which apply to one and the same proposition as affirmation and negation."[74]

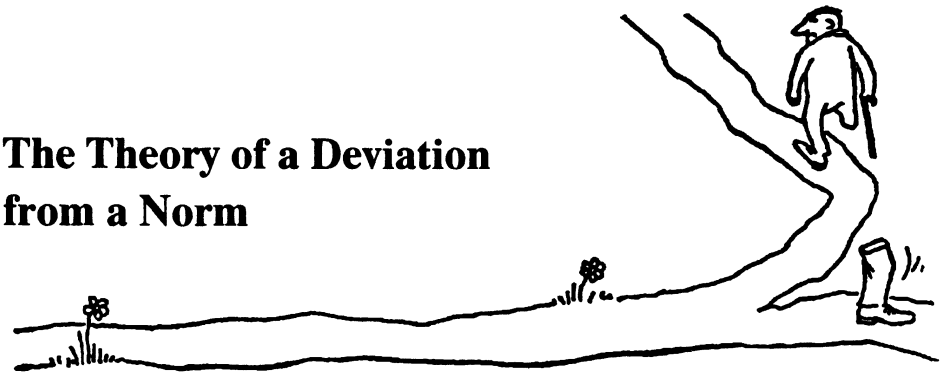
Since Hegel, the term "contradiction" has gained a different meaning as well and has been used by Marxist philosophers to denote an objective unity of the extremes which belongs to the essence of the real. Applied in this meaning, which differs from the traditional logical one, the term is not unequivocal. Adam Schaff offered a precise Marxist semantic analysis of the term in question and the results he achieved suggest that two of the meanings he managed to distinguish may have something to do with the comical: contradiction taken as incongruity and contradiction understood as a strife of conflicting tendencies.[75]

Neither Hegel nor other representatives of the theory of incongruity clarify the meaning of the term "contradiction" which they employ to account for the phenomenon of the comical. A thorough contextual analysis as well as an examination of their examples, however, prove that they employ the term "contradiction" chiefly in the sense of incongruity. Timofeev, Borev and Collins-Swabey actually use the notions contradiction, incompatibility and incongruity interchangeably. In another usage of the term associated with the phenomenon of the comical, "contradiction" is taken to mean a strife of conflicting tendencies which come to the fore e.g. in the humour of the characters. In comical works we can find many examples of a strife of conflicting

inclinations and desires (innate avarice and vanity which compels one to show off).

Undoubtedly the theory of incongruity shares many motifs with the theory of contrast. When we accept unfulfilled expectation as the source of the experience of the comical we have in mind an incongruity between expectation and reality. If we follow the conception of the seeming we also mean an incongruity of external appearances and the true essence of the phenomenon. Contrast is most often defined as a flagrant opposition, an incongruity, or, generally speaking, a unity and a struggle of oppositions. The supporters of contrast talk about a struggle of mutually exclusive emotions, and the struggle of conflicting tendencies is one of the meanings of the term "incongruity". Incongruity as the source of the comical has been also accepted by the theory of deviation from a norm.

The Theory of a Deviation from a Norm



Some of the scholars concerned with the comical claim that every phenomenon which deviates from a commonly accepted norm and thus seems superfluous and ludicrous must be comical.

The theory was initiated by a German aesthetician Karl Groos. However, since among its essential motifs we find the motif of the subject's superiority over the object of the experience of the comical his theory shall be dealt with while the discussion moves on to the theories of mixed motifs. The theory had also its Polish adherents such as Jan Bystroń, Tadeusz Peiper and Jan Trzynadlowski.

Tadeusz Peiper who laid theoretical foundations for the Cracow "Avantgarde" group had an interesting theory of the comical in that he inferred the comical from the role of laughter in primitive society. Peiper defines the comical as a "'misfortune' which evokes exhilaration"[76] (in this respect he comes close to Władysław Witwicki's theory of impotence), but the manner in which he develops his definition suggests that it should be properly classified as a theory of deviation from a norm. "Laughter has become a reaction of an individual and a group to those human attributes which fall below an average level of human attributes (...) Ridicule has become a defence against monstrosity, a condemnation of all socially detrimental deviations from normality."[77]

Peiper holds that the egoism of a group and the necessities of its existence have transformed the miserable, the weak, the handicapped, the fainthearted, into the ludicrous. But his definition quite needlessly restricts the comical to ridicule. Comical laughter is not always so malicious and cruel; on the contrary, it may well be warm, indulgent, and understanding.

Bystroń belongs to the group of scholars who drew consequences from the lot of his predecessors and gave up the attempts to produce a general and fully sufficient formula of the comical. Instead they concentrated on an empirical analysis of particular forms of the comical and on their ordering. We can, however, distinguish one leading theme in Bystroń's conception. He sees as comical various "deviations from a norm," departures from "the established, the accepted," "from something (...) regular, or binding," "from the conventional."[78]

For Bystroń a ludicrous person is the one who "behaves improperly, deviating from a more or less regular norm".[79] "Up till now laughter accompanies every breaking up of the hitherto observed habits or violating traditional views".[80] "Anything may be comical if it transgresses an accepted routine."[81] Bystroń takes as comical all kinds of deviations from the norms of an accepted fashion, from linguistic conventions, from logical rules, from conceptual standards, customs and social conventions, from what has been accepted as normal in human characters, etc.[82] It seems that Bystroń's conception is broad enough to cover all possible instances of the comical. However, it is too broad in that having resigned from defining the subjective conditions of the experience of the comical, Bystroń has abandoned the distinction between comical phenomena and the phenomena which deviate from norms but which at the same time have nothing to do with the comical.

A more ambitious attempt was taken by Jan Trzynadlowski. The comical appears when reality is distorted and a phenomenon is abnormal in a both negative and a positive sense.[83] The author who works in the domain of the comical either creates situations and phenomena which exhibit "features which depart from a universally binding or postulated norm"[84] or finds dis-

tortions from "regularity" which enable him to accept the situation as comical in the objectively given facts.[85]

"As long as the comical arises from an excessive deformation of reality, the essential feature of excess is contrast" and other properties of the comical may be derived from contrast as its most fundamental feature.

Abnormality and deformation, however, do not always lead to the experience of the comical. Deformation becomes comical only when it does not violate our individual sense of security and displays no, even fictive, element which could do harm to what the recipient holds as dear and close, or at least indifferent from "an objective point of view".[86]

It would be easy to falsify Trzynadlowski's theory if he made do with the claims presented above. We could point to the jokes or anecdotes representing the macabre humour which delight in such harmful and ghastly phenomena as executions and murder. Also satire aims as such at those phenomena which are harmful. But Trzynadlowski has foreseen such an objection. He proves that these facts do not violate the principle of an individual sense of security since the recipients experiencing the comical do not face the real executions or murders but only their representations which have been appropriately processed by their author. They experience a kind of "comic isolation" which enables them to take no account of the harmful and horrible nature of these phenomena and events. Their perception of such works concentrates not upon horror but upon the comical contrast and incongruity. Everybody knows that the situations and events presented are used to create comical effects and no one takes them seriously.[87]

Trzynadlowski's claim that not only a negative deviation from the norm but also a positive one may be comical is an original and important observation. Also his remark that the phenomenon which deviates from a binding or postulated norm is comical is accurate. One should object, however, to treating the notions of "deformation" and "deviation from a norm" as interchangeable. Instead, the extensions of these notions intersect with each other so that not every deformation deviates from a norm and not every deviation from a norm must be a deformation. Abstract art has accepted deformation as a

norm but this does not mean that its advocates have to experience the comical while perceiving abstract paintings even though the conditions of "the individual sense of security" and "harmlessness" have been meet.

The theory of deviation from norm has been indirectly accepted by a prominent director of Leningrad Comedy Theatre Nicolai Akimov. "If everything in a performance goes regularly, the characters are good and proper, the events do not transgress the commonly accepted norms and there are no adventures, or events which could break the characters' balance, then there is simply no comedy."[88] A more general and more comprehensive account of the conception of the deviation from a norm was presented by a Soviet theorist and theatre critic Vladimir Frolov. "By means of laughter humankind judges and criticizes all that does not conform to the ideal of beauty, that contradicts a generally accepted representations of the human destiny and role."[89] We commonly laugh at what does not conform to our notions, what is nonsensical from our point of view, what violates the normal and the common.

The theory of the deviation from a norm was defended by a French theorist E. Aubouin for whom a human being becomes comical when we notice in him features different from those that we have expected to notice or from those that we take to be normal. Features such as these degrade their owner to some extent, but they should not evoke suffering and unpleasant feelings in the subject of the experience of the comical.[90]

Aubouin distinguishes three criteria to qualify the behaviour or objects as ludicrous:

A rational impersonal criterion. It is ludicrous to wear clothes which do not fit the figure and the age of a person, or the season. It is also ludicrous if one moves awkwardly and aimlessly, or if one does not know basic things or infers false conclusions, etc.

A personal criterion. Everything which offends our predilections, tastes and habits is ludicrous.

A social criterion. Anyone who does not observe the laws and preferences of his social milieu, and who differs from others in his appearance, clothing, language or customs, is classified as ludicrous.[91]

In some instances the three criteria go together, more often, however, they conflict with each other. One could expect that in a case of conflict the first criterion should win; but in reality individual or social prejudice often competes successfully with reason.

Aubouin says that objects and human actions are ludicrous when they differ from the ones accepted in a given milieu, or when they draw people's attention to the person who performs such actions.[92] Thus it is habit and not reason which dictates the laws which anyone who wishes to avoid becoming ludicrous has to observe. When reason and habit are in conflict, it comes almost as a rule that the latter wins (at least initially). It may often be the case that the person who does the ridiculing is incapable of giving an explanation why an object or an action is ludicrous for him. Therefore the only possible explanation is by reference to the overwhelming role of habitude. Such an explanation is additionally supported by the fact that an unknown habit loses its comical character when we get used to it.

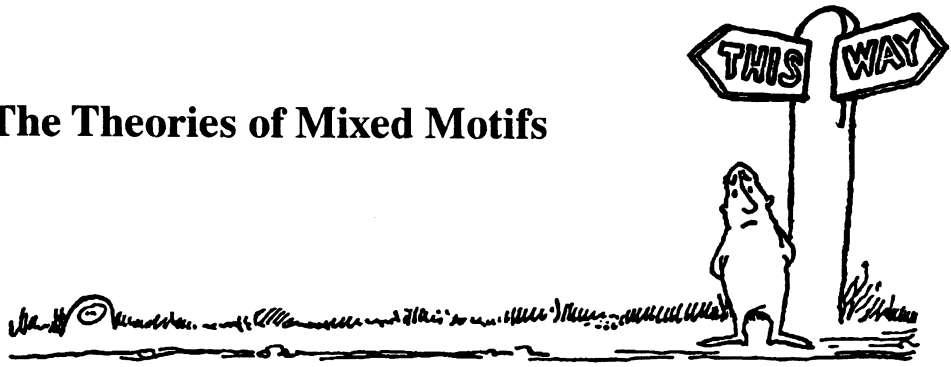
If we realize that from the point of view of the theory of deviation from a norm the subject takes as comical only those phenomena which depart from his sense of normality or from the social norms which he accepts, it is easy to notice a strong relationist tendency in the theory. Some phenomena or properties of an object are comical only when there is a particular relation between them and the subject, i.e. an incongruity between these phenomena and the norms accepted of the subject. However, the supporters of the conception are not always fully aware of the relationist tendency and therefore it rarely finds direct and clear exposition in their formulations. Yet relationism is one of the most valuable assets of this theory.

The theory of deviation from a norm has its supporters among Anglo-American aestheticians. C. Milton Naham, for example, holds that the presentation of those properties, peculiarities and manifestations of eccentricities of human nature which deviate from social norms is typical of all

forms of the comical.[93] A similar view has been expressed by Robert C. Elliott[94] and James Sutherland.[95]

Among the Soviet theorists of the comical the theory of deviation from a norm was supported by Vladimir Propp.[96]

The Theories of Mixed Motifs



Groos's Theory

Groos's theory has two basic themes: the motif of the deviation from the norm and the motif of the superiority of the subject of the comical over the object of the experience. Groos mentions subjective and objective conditions of the experience of the comical. The subjective condition of the experience of the comical is our *aesthetic attitude* which consists in concentrating attention and interest upon the look of an object. In objective terms the experience of the comical is conditioned by the presence of an absurd (*verkehrt*) object which we treat with a feeling of superiority yet at the same time without strong feelings of compassion or fear. For Groos everything which deviates from a norm (e.g. a deformation of class features or aimless movements) displays an absurd character.[97] To define the basis of the comical Groos makes use of the word *Verkehrtheit* (absurdity, erroneousness) because in his opinion it is semantically broader than such terms as incongruity, nonsense, or illogicality which are employed by some authors to define the essence of the comical.

Groos is quite right when he identifies the essence of the comical with an evident departure from a norm without further debating whether the departure in question may or may not be reduced to something illogical. Accepting phenomena which deviate from a broadly understood norm, from what we accept to be normal, everyday, habitual, as the defining feature of the comical, gives us a chance to embrace all the forms of the comical. Groos com-

bines the deviation from a norm with the feeling of superiority over the object of the comical. Following Hobbes he emphasizes that the comical evokes in us a pleasant feeling of superiority over the object of the comical. The experience of the comical always involves someone who is ridiculed - a victim, though the victim does not have to be someone other than the author of the comical or the subject of the experience of the comical. We may, for example, laugh at someone who exaggerates when telling a story. It happens also that listeners them-selves may be laughed at because they failed to notice that the story is exaggerated or absurd. When we finally come to understand its nonsensical character, the very fact of this discovery may make us feel superior.

The major moments of the experience of the comical are bewilderment (*Verblüffung*) produced by the absurdity and the feeling of superiority evoked by its disclosure. Groos distinguishes three stages in the experience of the comical: a) the moment of astonishment and surprise, b) the middle stage which fits in between the moment of astonishment and the moment of the discovery of the absurdity, c) the feeling of superiority and a pleasant mood which result from the discovery of inappropriateness.

This observation is accurate for some forms of the comical; however, it cannot be used as an element of the general definition of the comical because it would restrict its extension by excluding some other forms of the comical, for example jokes. Neither the joke nor its teller have to evoke in us a feeling of superiority; on the contrary, they often amaze us with the accuracy and originality of thought, with intelligence or intellectual brilliance. A joke does not have to be critical; it may well contain startling and accurate observations and be immediately comprehended giving us a feeling of cognitive satisfaction arising from our having realized our mental capacities. But there is no victim involved here over which we could feel superiority.

At times we experience the comical without any clear feeling of superiority over the characters involved in comical situations as when a kitten pokes a big dog with its paw and the dog retreats to its kennel. The experience of the comical arises here as a result of a situation which departs from a norm, but at the same time involves no feeling of superiority.

We can agree, however, that *too strong* a felling of compassion or fear may effectively block the experience of the comical. Like other advocates of the theory of deviation from the norm Groos is a relationist.

Bergson's Theory

Henri Bergson's original theory of the comical combines both the elements of the theories of degradation and of a negative feature and the theory of incongruity. Bergson's theory stems directly from his philosophical system. We experience the comical only in our social interactions, so that the comical character of inanimate objects and other creatures may arise only as a result of their relations (e.g. their similarity) to a human being. For Bergson the aesthetic attitude is a necessary condition for the experience of the comical.

Bergson considers as ludicrous the mark of something mechanical encrusted upon the living. For him a mechanism embodied in a natural thing and an automatic character of society regulated by laws make two types of comical effects. "We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing. ... The comical is that side of a person which reveals his likeness to a thing, that aspect of human events which, through its peculiar inelasticity, conveys the impression of pure mechanism, of automatism, of movement without life."[98] Bergson treats the stigma of the mechanic and the automatic in a living creature as a negative, degrading quality (cf. the theories of negative feature and degradation). For Bergson the essence of reality is unique, individual, and mutable and therefore the automatic and the rigid *oppose* the mobility of life and are comical (the theory of incongruity).

Bergson was aware that his conception did not cover and explain all instances of the comical. He believed, however, that the remainder were to a greater or lesser degree similar to those that are covered by his definition. All the attempts to work out a unanimous and universal formula for the comical he thought to be futile. This explains why he refrained from providing precise univocal definitions and used the terms "rigidity," "the automatic," and "the mechanic" in a broad meaning.

Bergson provided a variety of examples to confirm his theory and indeed the theory may be effectively employed in art (Charlie Chaplin's *Our Times* and Jaques Tati's *My Uncle*). But Bergson's definition is not universal. Like other theories discussed so far it is both too broad and too narrow. Bergson himself was aware that his theory was too narrow and this explains why he tried to understand the basic categories in broadest manner possible. Yet the theory covers also some cases of the mechanic and the automatic in the living which are not comical. We do not experience the comical when watching the soldiers at drill nor a rhythmic and precise group gymnastics nor the joints between bones though they do function mechanically.

Freud's Theory

In his book on the theory of the joke Freud developed a psychological approach to the essence of jokes and the comical, popular at the end of the 19th century. Rather than studying the essence of the comical and humour Freud was interested in the nature of jokes. He did not present an aesthetic analysis of the phenomena of the comical and humor nor did he treat jokes and humour as some kinds of the comical. He main interest was the psychological mechanism of jokes and of the experiences of the comical and humour. He also investigated the sources of the pleasures which accompany their experiences. He concentrated on jokes because of their relationship with the unconscious.

Freud distinguished two basic forms of jokes: tendentious and non-tendentious (innocent, harmless).[99] He was mainly interested in the tendentious jokes which he thought gave a more intensive pleasure and evoked a more intensive laughter than the innocent jokes. The source of the pleasure produced by innocent jokes is mainly the very technique of a joke, whereas in the case of the tendentious joke the source of pleasure is located in the unconscious. Freud distinguished three basic genres of tendentious jokes: exposing or obscene jokes, aggressive (hostile) jokes, and cynical (critical, blasphemous) jokes.[100]

The natural drives are suppressed in the psyche of a person by the rules of morality, logic, the sense of decency, etc. Every hindrance of the natural impulse requires mental energy. The function of jokes is to omit hindrances and save some amount of mental energy. [101]

The pleasure of jokes has its location in the unconscious. Tendentious jokes (aggressive, indecent or cynical) give pleasure to their recipients since they satisfy in a sublimated form their inborn sex or aggression drives and thus omit the restrictions imposed by the super-ego and save the mental energy which otherwise would have to be used for hindrance.[102]

In non-tendentious jokes the pleasure arises as a result of the technique of the joke which allows us to avoid the expenditure of mental energy spent normally on hindering our thoughts by means of controlling them logically. The technique of the joke frees us from logical control because a logically correct thought finds a logically incorrect expression in a joke and is disguised by a word play or nonsense. An absurd joke is a revolt against the tyranny of reason. An additional source of pleasure in a joke is the reactivation of the infantile childhood pleasure such as the play of words, nonsense, and exhibitionism.

In his views on jokes Freud observed accurately that a jocose form may express (without external or internal reservations) meanings which cannot be expressed in a serious manner. However, he did not manage to work out an exhaustive and satisfying explanation of this phenomenon.

Many of Freud's statements concerning the nature of jokes seem to be arguable, but it is difficult to argue with some of them without committing oneself to a polemic with the principles of Freud's psychoanalysis whose weakness often lies in that they are excessive generalizations of particular observations which are accurate in individual cases (for example the thesis of the universality of the impulse of aggression). This, however, would require more place than we can offer Freud here. Therefore it may be more economical if we devote some attention to particular theses concerning the specificity of the jokes and of the comical. What is objectionable in Freud, for example, is his conviction that the perception of the comical involves a liberation from

the constraints of reason and criticism since the meaning in a joke is concealed by nonsense. It seems that a full comprehension of a joke is impossible without being aware whether a given utterance is a real or only a seeming nonsense. Uncovering and understanding hidden meaning requires more of perceptiveness and intellectual activity than a comprehension of overtly accessible sense expressed without the disguise of word play or absurdity. Even though many of Freud's more detailed views are arguable it is evident that he enriched our knowledge concerning the psychological mechanisms of jokes and inspired further research.

Much more arguable are Freud's theses concerning the comical. Freud holds that there are several important differences between the comical and the joke. First, the comical manifests itself obviously not only in words but in the situations, appearances, movements, actions, habits and features of the character as well. Secondly, Freud did not locate the source of pleasure accompanying the perception of the comical in the unconscious but in the conscious. Comical pleasure in general has to do with a more or less conscious comparison of the imperfection of a person who makes the object of the comical with the actual or the ostensible perfection of the subject. As it stands, such a general formula is acceptable. Freud, however, claimed that also in this case the comical pleasure stems directly from saving mental energy and tried to prove this at all cost. The progress of culture is responsible for a natural human tendency towards a reduction of the amount of physical effort and investing more and more energy into mental activities. This explains why we see as ludicrous bodily movements which are too big, exaggerated and superfluous. On the contrary, in the case of mental activities, we laugh at someone who went too far in making his work easy. Our laughter expresses the pleasure evoked by the feeling of superiority over peoplewho are ludicrous, which must mean (although Freud does not admit that openly) that in the spheres of both mental life and physical activities those phenomena are ludicrous which represent a deviation from a norm. The role of a norm is played by the rules of the economy of physical effort and the intensification of mental activity. We realize that a given movement is superfluous when we

compare its representation with a representation of a movement which is appropriate in a given situation. A representation of a bigger movement requires a bigger amount of mental energy. While we have been observing a movement which is too broad (uneconomical), mental energy necessary for its representation was concentrating in our consciousness. At the same time, however, we imagine an appropriate ("smaller") movement and since this act of imagination requires a smaller amount of mental energy the difference between the two representations provides us with some surplus of mental energy which gets released in the form of laughter.[103] Freud does not explain how the perception of a simplified mental activity allows its recipient to save mental energy. In this fragment of his theory Freud follows Spencer, Lipps and Hobbes supplementing their views with indiscriminately accepted assumptions. However, there are many points to be questioned here. Why does a representation of a bigger movement require a bigger amount of mental energy than a representation of a smaller movement? Why do we have to imagine the movement which is currently being observed? Should the energy spent on imagining the appropriate ("smaller") movement be added to, rather than subtracted from, the amount of energy spent on imagining an inappropriate ("too broad") movement? In the case when we imagine two movements instead of one and compare the two representations there is more energy spent than in the other case, and there is not only no surplus of energy but, on the contrary, more energy must be spent. Contrary to what Freud says, we laugh not only at movements too broad and mental activities too small but also at movements which are excessively tiny, particularly when the person moving is tall and sturdily built, and at very intensive mental efforts which are out of proportion with their poor results.

Of much greater interest are Freud's remarks concerning humour which he put forth both in his monograph on the subject and in "Humor", the paper of 1928.[104]

As in the case of jokes and the comical, the source of the pleasure of humour is the saving of expenditure of mental energy. However, as long as the pleasure in jokes originates from an economy of expenditure in inhibi-

tion and the pleasure in the comical stems from an economy of expenditure in thought, the pleasure in humour arises from an economy of expenditure in feeling.[105]

Humour originates when the existing possibility of experiencing painful emotions involving mental energy does not realize itself and thus mental energy is discharged in a pleasant way. In the paper on humour Freud says that the viewer's or listener's satisfaction in the comical arises "from the saving of expenditure in feeling." At the same time, however, he broadens the characteristics of humour claiming that contrary to joke which is "the contribution of the unconscious to the comic" humour is "a contribution to the comical made through the agency of the super-ego."[106] It is in humour that ego liberates itself from the restrictions of the super-ego and the requirements of the real.

On the whole Freud's conception is arbitrary and far from being clear-cut. Its popularity is mainly due to the fame of its author's name. Arguable as it is in many of its points, Freud's conception has nonetheless inspired a considerable number of the theorists of the comical, such as, among others, Ernst Kris and Martin Grotjahn whose works constitute the most interesting examples of psychoanalytical research.[107]

Lunacharsky's Theory

Though he did not formulate a fully developed theory of the comical, Anatoly Lunacharsky, a prominent Marxist aesthetician, offered a number of interesting comments on the subject. Characterizing the objective aspect of the comical he basically accepted the theory of the deviation from a norm. Every comical phenomenon is original, different from what is customary and commonplace. This difference, however, is unimportant, even ostensible. "Every small deviation from an ordinary type of human appearance is ludicrous as long as it does not go too far, or else it becomes hideous and repulsive. Small violations of the decent are ludicrous (...) In all these cases we have an under-developed feeling of disgust, indignation and compassion

cut by understanding their wretchedness and discharged unexpectedly easily."[108]

The fragment quoted shows clearly that having accepted the conception of deviation from a norm as a basis for the characterisation of the comical, Lunacharsky remains aware that not all the phenomena which meet this condition have to be comical. He is therefore right in his attempts to distinguish comical phenomena among a big class of those phenomena which are deviations from a norm.

According to Lunacharsky, the experience of the comical takes place when a strong and negative emotion such as astonishment, fear, discontent, indignation, repulsion, etc. is blocked and unexpectedly discharged. "Every new idea, every new fact or object evoke the concentration of human attention. The uncommon becomes a problem for us and alarms us. To calm down we have to reduce the novelty to what we already know so that it no longer bothers us with its surprising and, perhaps consequently, dangerous character."[109]

The organism reacts to an unexpected combination of external stimuli with a mobilization of energy and the readiness for an intensified effort. When we suddenly realize that the upsetting novelty is "only a mask behind which we notice something we know well and do not have to be afraid of", the concentrated energy is directly and instantaneously discharged producing in us a pleasant feeling.

It is not difficult to notice that Lunacharsky's theory was influenced by Spencer, a fact confirmed by Lunacharsky himself.[110] Like Freud, Lunacharsky encountered a number of difficulties while explaining where the surplus of energy came from. In his opinion, the solution to this problem had to do with defining the specificity of these phenomena which evoked the experiences of the comical due to their deviating from a norm. Lunacharsky thought that both problems might be solved if only those phenomena were accepted as comical which only *slightly deviate from a norm* and which differ from what we are well acquainted with only *seemingly*. This is the source of energy which becomes activated when we have noticed something different,

novel and startling but which is no longer necessary when we realize that the "novel" is in fact something we are familiar with.

This interpretation, however, does not apply to all of the cases of the comical. There are comical phenomena which do deviate from a norm considerably and yet do not lose their everyday character while being experienced as comical.

Lunacharsky's observations lead him to a false conclusion that the discovery of a seeming novelty and distinctiveness of a phenomenon and its reduction to the familiar automatically produces a tranquilizing conviction that no danger is involved here any more. But a familiar phenomenon may be very dangerous as well.

The Theory of Władysław Witwicki

Bain's theory of degradation found an ardent supporter in a prominent Polish psychologist Władysław Witwicki. Actually, however, Witwicki's theory of the comical[111] represents neither the theory of degradation nor the neighbouring theory of a negative feature. Witwicki is similar to Groos in that he holds that the aesthetic attitude which requires a concentration of the subject's attention upon the look of the object is a necessary condition for the experience of the comical. Only the look may be ludicrous. Witwicki interprets the notion of the look very broadly and talks not only about the looks of persons and situations but also about the looks of mental states. Seen against the background of the comical, laughter expresses joy at a look of a person or a thing whose visible impotence does not evoke strong feelings of compassion, terror, repulsion, fear, outrage and despair. To be ludicrous a phenomenon must have evoked admiration, respect, veneration, fear and then suddenly displayed its impotence, or must only seem respectful, magnificent, fearful and grand being at the same time openly impotent in the moral or physical sense. The greater the contrast between the appearances and the actual power, the more evidently comical the phenomenon. Thus in his conception of the comical Witwicki makes use of the basic thesis of the theory of appearance. He also employs the concept of contrast, though he

makes a reservation that contrast as such is not ludicrous but only emphasizes comical features. Witwicki's contribution to the development of the conceptions of the negative feature, the degradation of the object, and the superiority of the subject significantly improved these theories. He achieved this result, however, through supplementing and strengthening the initial theories (Hobbes's and Bain's) with the theories of appearance and contrast.

Like Bain's theory, Witwicki's theory does not account for all of the cases of the comical.

The Theory of Zofia Lissa

Zofia Lissa concentrated primarily on the phenomenon of the comical in music, though, at the same time, her observations drew upon a general theory of the comical. Lissa quite rightly opposed both extreme objectivism and one-sided psychologism. In her view, the comical may be perceived only "when specific subjective conditions meet some special conditions in the subject," when a relationship exists "between specific properties of the perceived object and some dispositions of the subject of perception."[112] For Lissa the objective basis of the comical lies in "an incommensurability, divergence, contrast, incongruity, etc. appearing within one and the same look, object, event and the like."[113]

An incommensurable combination of properties or elements within a whole is a combination which is rare, uncommon, and paradoxical from our point of view. It is assumed that in order to take heed of the novelty, or strangeness, of some combinations, the subject must be appropriately tuned in. And indeed, the perception of reality induces in the subject a series of patterns of representation and belief, i.e. sets.

"'All sets' (either of representation or of belief) determine subsequently the way we experience reality. Everything else which in a given realm remains outside our set, is perceived as strange. In every act of perception we unconsciously compare a presently perceived object with our representational patterns and with our beliefs concerning its properties, even those which are not included in its present look."[114] The primary objective condition for the ap-

pearance of the comical is thus the incommensurability obtaining between objective phenomena and our sets. Obviously, the sets are changing, old ones being replaced by the new ones, and this accounts for the historical variety of the forms of the comical (some of the phenomena perceived as comical are no longer seen as such when they conform to the new sets; think of novelties in fashion, new trends in art, etc.).

Lissa's conception rationalizes the relative character of comical and its modifications which change the extension of the realm of the comical objects. The concept of "incommensurability with sets" expresses in different terms the basic idea of the theory of deviation from the norm provided that the notion of the "norm" be taken in its broad sense. Our sets are nothing but "representations" and "beliefs" concerning the phenomena, events and the relationships between the elements of an object with which we are familiar and which we therefore take as normal. It is they then that are responsible for our sets. All that does not conform to our sets seems strange, bizarre, and ludicrous.

The fact of the incommensurability of some phenomena with our sets is a necessary but insufficient condition of the experience of the comical. Not every incommensurability with our sets must necessarily lead to the comical perception of an object; it may well result in an unpleasant disappointment, astonishment or a feeling of joy. In all these cases, however, "the object of perception is taken seriously in an existential set and evokes in us stronger emotional reactions which destroy any possibility of constituting the comical in the subject."[115]

We adopt a "serious" set towards matters which inseparably interlock with our practical and mental life and which may influence it considerably. Towards art, on the contrary, we take a different, "not serious," stance.

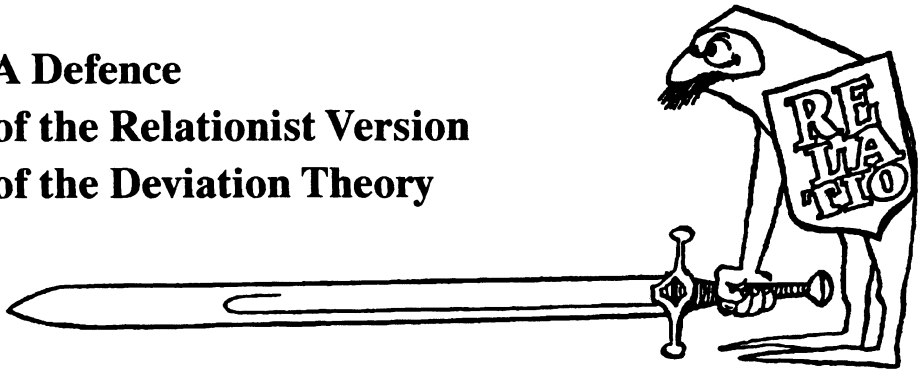
No one could deny that our attitude towards art is often "not serious"; Lissa, however, goes too far in that she generalizes this statement. What she says may suggest that "the affairs belonging to the world presented in works of art" cannot in any important way influence our mental and practical lives.[116] It does not take much effort to refute this statement if taken as a general

thesis. It is the power and charm of art that so often it does "seriously" influence both our mental life and our practical life as well - even if we are not Don Quixote.

Thus the principal condition of the experience of the comical is taking a "not serious" attitude towards an object incommensurable with our sets which excludes the occurrence of strong emotional ties between the object and the subject. The experience of the comical and the aesthetic experience are two different kinds of experiences for Lissa though there are some similarities between them. Both share the same starting point; both concentrate upon the qualities of the object. In the case of the experience of the comical the central quality is the incommensurability of the object, its strangeness and its bizarre character. However, there are more differences than similarities here. In the aesthetic experience the initial emotion allows the subject to gain deeper insight into the quality of the object. In the experience of the comical the initial emotion turns into a feeling typical of the existential attitude which centres around the "feeling of one's own superiority". The stimulus evoking the experience of the comical confronts us while in the existential attitude and results in a change of our attitude to the "not serious" one and a perception of the stimulus (the processes which Lipps defined as *Stauung der Gefühle*). Ultimately, the final stage of the experience of the comical is a return to the "serious" attitude accompanied by a feeling of power and one's own superiority (cf. Hobbes). Both the feeling of one's own superiority and the precedent feelings of astonishment and surprise, however, are secondary emotional correlatives of the two intellectual acts of 1) grasping the incommensurability between the phenomenon and our sets, and 2) mastering new relationships and incorporating them in the network of our sets. Lastly, the condition of the experience of the comical is an unexpected appearance of the object. "It must surprise us with both its quality and its very appearance." "A sudden change of the attitude is an additional condition of the comical effect."[117] At the same time Lissa impairs the thesis that this condition is indeed necessary: "Expecting a comical phenomenon reduces the power of the comical." The comical effect is also diminished by a repetition of the same

stimulus. If the fact that there is no surprise only lessens the power of the comical but does not exclude it altogether, then an unanticipated, abrupt appearance of the stimulus is not a necessary condition of the experience of the comical. Surprise, however, is a requisite condition since it increases the intensity of the experience of the comical. Such an interpretation of the role of surprise in the experience of the comical seems to be most adequate.

A Defence of the Relationist Version of the Deviation Theory



None of the scholars discussed so far provided a universal and fully comprehensive theory of the comical. Even though each of the theories accurately explained some of the manifestations of the comical none of them was general enough to cover all of its forms. They were also too abstract and too distant from the concrete phenomena of the comical to account for their characteristic properties.

Is then a fully comprehensive and satisfactory definition of the comical possible at all or is the phenomenon of the comical fully resistant to any kind of conceptual analysis? The most likely answer would be that it is indeed hardly possible to work out a formula that would meet these criteria and thus survive a confrontation with the multifarious manifestations of the comical. One could, of course, follow the anti-essentialist tradition inspired by L. Wittgenstein (M. Weitz, W. Kennick[118] and others) and claim that all the definitions and theories of the comical which have been searching for the essence of the comical are based on a wrong assumption for there is simply no such essence. Hence one should give up the attempts to define such concepts as "the comical" and "humour" because they are open concepts and we shall never be able to define the necessary and the sufficient conditions for their accurate application. To my mind, however, the anti-essentialist position is not sufficiently justified and therefore I assume that even though the problem of defining the comical is both difficult and complex it is not unreasonable to

think that there is a chance of providing a more or less comprehensive theory of the phenomenon.

From the viewpoint of theory two opposing research perspectives are applicable here.

The first one involves an empirical and concrete analysis of particular comical phenomena aiming at a classification of various forms of the comical leading to some generalized conclusions. This kind of research is to be found in Bystroń's and Kleiner's theories.

The other one might begin with a hypothesis concerning the "genesis of the comic" or its "essence" formulated on the basis of the available research results which would be further examined in relation to various forms of the comical and modified accordingly.

I shall employ the latter variant in my work. It follows, then, that I shall also either necessarily accept one of the theories discussed so far or propose a new original one.

The talk about the essential features of the comical involves such notions as "contrast," "contradiction," "incongruity," "incommensurability," and "a deviation from a norm." When discussing the theory of incongruity I have already attempted to prove that the generic notion for the notions of "contrast" and "contradiction" is the notion of "incongruity." It seems also feasible to reduce these notions to two basic ones: "incongruity" and "a deviation from a norm." The motifs of "incongruity" and "a deviation from a norm" appeared as well in all the theories of mixed motifs; they are to be found even in Witwicki's conception which derives from the theories of "negative feature" and "degradation". It seems also that those observations provided by the theories of "negative feature" and "degradation" which are accurate can be classified as belonging to the two basic conceptions ("incongruity" and "a deviation from a norm").

Aristotle's conception of the comical was too narrow for two basic reasons. Firstly, he reduced comical phenomena to negative features. Secondly, his formulation of the condition of their harmlessness was inaccurate. His account therefore does not apply to all forms of the comical. On the other hand,

there are phenomena which are not comical even though they do meet the conditions specified by Aristotle. It is true, however, that some harmless defects are ludicrous. But we do accept as "negative features", as something "defective" and "ugly", those phenomena which either do not conform to social norms we approve of, or which go against our subjective sense of the normal, our habits, our representations and notions concerning the normal appearance, the normal set of the features of characters and capacities, the normal manners of reactions, thinking, etc.

Bain's theory is even narrower than Aristotle's and can be reduced to one of these conceptions as well. The degradation of a person or an affair means in actual fact that there is an incongruity between our representations and the notions concerning the properties and situations which we ascribe to a serious person or an affair and the factual situation which degrades the "person" or the "affair".

If the theories of the "negative feature" and "degradation" may be reduced to the theory of "incongruity" or "deviation from a norm" then the same applies to all the theories of mixed motifs, the more so that in each of these theories there appear the motifs of "incongruity" or "deviation from a norm".

The reason why, for example, Bergson's theory is too broad is that not every "mechanical" and "automatic" quality in the living must be comical. They are comical only when they deviate from a norm and if they belong to the normal characteristics of a given object they do not produce an experience of the comical. Therefore we cannot say that soldiers at drill, rhythmic group gymnastics, or printing processes which mechanically record and transmit a living human thought are ludicrous. Bergson's conception, on the other hand, is too narrow, since there are phenomena which are comical even though they do not meet Bergson's requirements for being comical. A comical effect may be achieved not only through mechanizing a living creature but also through animating something mechanical and inanimate (an effect to be found in the earliest film comedies which made extensive use of various deviations from what was considered normal, e.g. a cupboard walking down the street).

Freud was right in saying that an excessive, inappropriate expenditure of physical energy is ludicrous, but he wrongly supposed that only exaggerated physical movements evoke the experience of the comical. Comic effects are achieved by all kinds of movements which deviate from a norm, i.e. by both too big and too small ones, particularly if the latter are performed by adults. Freud is also wrong to claim that only mental idleness is ludicrous; also very intensive mental effort which produces meager results may evoke the experience of the comical. These cases represent phenomena which deviate from the normal.

Reducing all the theories of the comical to two basic conceptions does not solve the problem definitively. What remains to be answered is the question of whether theories of incongruity and a deviation from a norm complement each other or can and should be further reduced one to the other?

It seems that the theory of a deviation from a norm may be interpreted as a version of the theory of incongruity mainly because the deviation of a phenomenon from a norm can be seen as an incongruity between the phenomenon and a norm, i.e. as a particular case of incongruity as such. This option was accepted by D. Hector Monro in his *Argument of Laughter*. Monro holds that all the hitherto existing theories of the comical may be reduced to the conception of inappropriateness. However, there is a reverse turn possible when every comical inappropriateness would be interpreted as deviating from a norm. The conception of a deviation from a norm seems to offer the best perspective for the creation of more or less complete and satisfactory theory of the comical. Two arguments justify this choice:

a) All kinds of incongruity (e.g. contradiction, contrast, etc.) which theorists of the comical take to be the basis of the phenomenon may be interpreted in terms of deviation from a norm.

b) The conception of the deviation from a norm is more useful and less abstract than the conception of incongruity and covers all the phenomena of the comical (provided that the term "deviation from a norm" is appropriately interpreted).

Let us discuss argument a). Each of the incongruities accepted as the object of the comical such as the incongruities between the essence (contents) of a phenomenon and its outer shape (form), the goal and the means, excessive ambitions and actual capacities, the conclusion and the premises, one's existential situation and his behavior, what one says and what he thinks or feels, etc., is either a manifestation of a norm (of logic, of ethics, of praxeology, etc.) or a phenomenon incongruent with our habits and our sense of the normal. Similarly it is possible to prove that every contrast capable of evoking the experience of the comical makes a phenomenon whose character is unusual, astonishing, and deviating from a norm; moreover, only this kind of contrast is ludicrous. We do not laugh at contrastive combinations of phenomena or properties which we are used to and therefore accept as everyday and normal.

Argument b). The conception of a deviation from a norm covers all the phenomena of the comical only when it is not exclusively reduced to breaking some objective social interdictions or injunctions. The term "deviation from a norm" shall also include the incongruity between a phenomenon and the attitudes, habits, needs, expectations and the sense of the normal of the subject.

The existence of a phenomenon that deviates from a norm for a subject capable of experiencing the comical is a necessary but insufficient condition for the subject's actual experience of the comical. In order for the experience of the comical to take place there are additional conditions to be met which define the relationship between the properties of the object and the dispositions of the subject.

Aristotle was one of the first theorists of the comical to suppose that a comical phenomenon cannot be deleterious. This view was accepted by Chernyshevsky and Überhorst, whereas Groos, Bain, Lunacharsky and Witwicki concentrated mainly on the subject, claiming that a phenomenon which is to become an object of the experience of the comical cannot evoke in the subject feelings whose strength and intensity might block the experience. Feelings which were most often mentioned in this context were fear, compassion

and repulsion. The most general formulation of this condition was put forth by Bain who held that the object of the comical cannot evoke both the experience of the comical and a strong feeling of some other kind. Aristotle's observation points to an undoubtedly important correlation but his account is not always unequivocal. None of the authors managed to propose a formulation which would not raise objections and doubts, particularly that satire as such addresses itself to harmful, fearful, and repulsive phenomena and humor often refers to the phenomena which evoke compassion. The importance of this observation bears on the fact that the comical is a constitutive element of satire and humor.

It might seem, then, that there are only two options left: either to give up this condition or to acknowledge that satire and humor are not inseparably connected with the comical. But there is a third option and we can find it in Trzynadlowski's theory. He rightly points to the fact that a real object which inspires a creator of the comical and the object of the subject's direct experience of the comical are not identical. Therefore Trzynadlowski's thesis that the *direct* object of the *experience* of the comical cannot hurt an "individual sense of security" at the moment of the experience does not lead to the conclusion that harmful, repulsive, pitiful phenomena cannot become objects of creation whose essential moment is the comical. The recipient does not directly perceive the phenomena which in real life evoke anger, repulsion or fear but their representations which have been appropriately processed by the satirist who oppugns them. The author who intends to ridicule the phenomena he criticizes adopts a manner of their presentation which lessens the impact of those features which might evoke fear or compassion.

We should also keep in mind that like the comical, satire can also employ such elements as the tragic, the dramatic, the pessimistic. The satirist intends to evoke not only the experience of the comical but of anger, contempt, disgust, and the like, as well. Humour, on the other hand, is more interested in evoking simultaneously the experience of the comical and of compassion. Both humour and satire rarely make use of the pure and simple forms of the

comical and therefore, consequently, rarely evoke pure, homogeneous experiences of the comical. They usually employ complex forms of the comical which combine the experiences of the comical with anger or contempt (satire) and, among others, with compassion (humour).

I shall return later to the problem of the differences between various forms of the comical.

The existence of various forms of the comical was one of the obstacles which made it difficult to work out such a definition of the comical which would be universal enough to include all of its forms without embracing the phenomena alien to it. Some theorists tried to include in the definition all the features specific for the comical but since they took as the constitutive elements of the comical in general the properties to be found in some of its manifestations their results were too narrow. Others who tried to eschew the problem proposed definitions which were so general that they included not only the comical phenomena but also phenomena that had nothing to do with the comical. An easy way out of the difficulties would be to resign from the search for one universal formula embracing all the forms of the comical and to concentrate on separate definitions of particular forms of the comical, e.g. giving one definition of the simple and pure comical and another one of the complex comical. One would have then to give a detailed explanation of the differences between the major forms of the ludicrous and to prove that their aggregate exhausts the scope of the comical in general.

There is, however, another option. We could once again attempt to create a formula which would embrace all the kinds of the comical. The definition would include those elements which characterize all the forms of the comical. It is not difficult, however, to predict that such a definition would be too general and too broad. Making such a formula concrete and eradicating those phenomena which are not the manifestations of the comical would take place only while characterizing the particular forms of the comical. This option will be adopted in the present work.

Every comical phenomenon which becomes a direct object of the experience of the comical meets two conditions: first, it represents in some

sense a deviation from a norm and secondly, it does not violate the sense of security of the subject and does not evoke the feeling of fear. This does not imply, however, that harmful, menacing, even macabre phenomena can become objects of the comical.

Other strong feelings such as anger, indignation, repulsion, compassion, etc., appear in the comical only when their intensity will not block the occurrence of strong experiences of the comical. In some complex forms of the comical typical of satire and humor the experiences of the comical may come together with anger, indignation, repulsion or compassion. Not all the phenomena which meet these conditions are necessarily comical. Therefore it might be worthwhile considering whether among those conditions of the comical which are to be found in various conceptions we might find a set of conditions which are met by all forms of the comical and could therefore be included in its general account.

A claim popular among the theorists of the comical holds that one of the conditions of the occurrence of the experience of the comical is an unexpected, sudden appearance of the object of the experience.

It is beyond doubt that some forms of astonishment and surprise either are an important source of *strong* experiences of the comical or very propitiously affect the intensity of the experience of the comical without being its direct cause. They cannot, however, be accepted as the only source of the comical and the necessary condition of every experience of the comical. The repeated perception of the same comical situations and jokes does lessen the intensity of the experience but does not block it altogether. Only when the unexpectedness of the situation or a reaction is the only cause of the comical can the experience be impeded. For many people re-reading the same comical books or re-watching the same film comedies give them sufficiently strong experiences of the comical. There is an anecdote about the Prince of Wales who enjoyed a joke about a horse which was capable of lying. It was told to him at breakfast time every morning for three years by a specially appointed butler and His Royal Highness is said to have enjoyed the comicality of the story every time.

In the case of some forms of the comical (e.g. the comical character) surprise does not play any important role in their experience. One can, for example, have a strong experience of the comical when observing the behavior of an eccentric and predicting his reactions. Thus, surprise cannot be accepted as a necessary condition of every experience of the comical though some forms of surprise may intensify this experience.

Some theorists of the comical such as Hobbes, Überhorst, Groos, Freud and Lissa hold that an essential moment for every experience of the comical is the feeling of superiority over the object of the experience. This observation is certainly germane to many forms of the comical, but it cannot be generalized since there are some forms of the comical whose perception does not involve the feeling of superiority (cf. Chapter I).

A number of conceptions of the comical describe the actual course of the experience of the comical in terms of a boisterous discharge of an excess of "mental energy". This description is indeed very accurate for some intensive forms of the experiences of the comical. If every mental activity necessarily involves an expenditure of "mental energy" then no experience of the comical is free from this, either, even if there is no outburst of laughter. One can doubt, however, whether in each case we can talk about the discharge of an *excess* of "mental energy". Doubts also arise as to the validity of the explanations provided in order to account for the causes of the reserve of energy which later appears superfluous. Nonetheless, in some cases of the experience of the comical the conception of the discharge of excess of energy is fully adequate.

There are cases of the experience of the comical, however, which do not involve the discharge of an *excess* of energy. Some film comedies or theatre performances which have been over-abundant in comical effects exhaust the viewers even physically so that one can suppose that the energy spent was not in excess. Charlie Chaplin was aware of this effect and therefore his movies contain a precisely balanced mixture of the moments of laughter, sentiment, reflection, even tragedy, and never tried to over-burden full-length comedies with comical effects.

Many misunderstandings in the theory of the comical arises because theorists look for the designata of the concept of the comical in heterogeneous fields and rarely specifying which field they are interested in. Some reduced the comical to comical objects while some treated the phenomenon of the comical in terms of its experience.

It seems that the comical can be reduced neither to solely objective nor to exclusively subjective factors. Its most complete existence requires a harmonious coexistence of objective and subjective factors. Firstly, what is needed is an object characterized by features which are incongruent with the features accepted by the subject as socially normal or with the subject's habits and his individual sense of the normal and which is therefore perceived by the subject as absurd and abnormal. The abnormality, however, cannot violate the subject's sense of personal security and evoke strong feelings such as fear, compassion, pity, repulsion, indignation, etc., for if too intensive they might block the experience of the comical altogether. The experience of the comical cannot take place if the subject has no sense of humor or is in a bad mood because of tiredness, depression or grief, either. Since social norms, habits, the notions of normality and the sense of the comical vary according to historical circumstances, the geographical milieu, the national character, the social position, the age of an individual, his cultural background, etc., what is considered abnormal, absurd and comical varies, too. The experience of the comical may be evoked by anything that offends our habits, tastes and likes, deviates from what we take as normal and are used to. We should also take into account that the criteria which govern our thinking and behavior are rarely fully rational because, as Aubouin rightly observes, our reactions are much more irrational than we are inclined to admit.

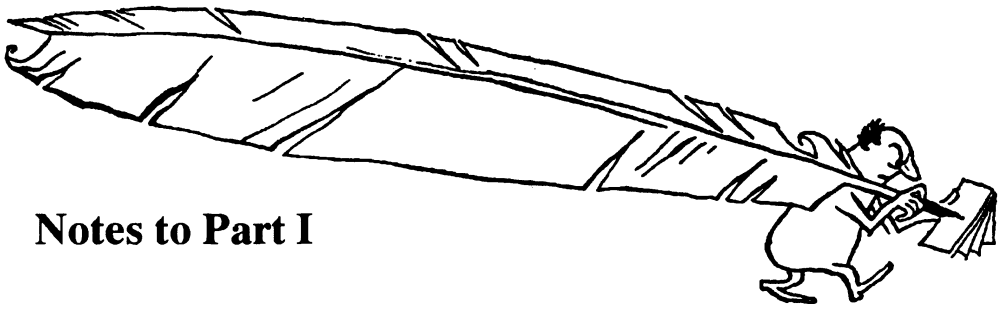
To illustrate our considerations let us quote a few examples. The French often laugh at people who drink water instead of wine at dinner, while the Poles consider it ludicrous that the French delight in snakes and frogs even though they have never tried these specialties themselves. There are nationalities which react with laughter when they are told that the Poles are very fond of stewed tripe which many of them would consider to be a nation-

al dish. For the bourgeois the inexhaustible sources of the comical are the behavior, the manner of speaking, the style of dressing and the way of thinking of peasants who in turn pay them back in the same way. Roman Catholics laugh at the customs and religious ceremonial of Jews or Muslims, being unaware that their own rituals seem no less ludicrous to observers who are not emotional about Catholicism. Ruling social classes have always made lower classes an object of derision while these in turn find compensation for injustice and humiliation in ridiculing the ruling groups.

In everyday life human beings and the objects which they use often become comical when we discover features in them which we find different from what we expect of them or from what we accept as normal. In every society there exists a paradigm of normality defining the set of features of character, appearance, mental and physical abilities which every normal human being should possess. The scope of what is treated as normal is usually quite broad. If, however, we cross the border of normality in that either a set of features, or some of them, are missing or are not adequately developed we are doomed to being ludicrous. Anything which violates the generic features ascribed to a normal appearance of a representative of a genus or is incongruent with our likes and habits and at the same time does not evoke strong feelings may be the source of laughter. In the case of clothes one may be comical if he is either old-fashioned or too modern, particularly if the most advanced fashion differs too much from what has been the norm so far. In the realm of social conventions the comical may arise not only when interpersonal norms and forms of behavior are broken but whenever our customs and traditions are infringed by novel patterns of behaviors. As an example of breaking traditional social conventions one might quote the efforts of the representatives of the feminist movement to give women equal employment rights with men. Similarly, there are conventions regulating separately the behavior of men and women concerning interests, preferences, likes, emotional reactions, manners of conduct, etc.

Finally, one of the most important social sources of the comical are the phenomena which deviate from the norms of decency. Indecency, as the

majority of the theorists of the comical unanimously admit, is one of the most available, popular and reliable sources of the comical which does not necessarily have to be vulgar. The more unexpected and improper it is, the greater its effectiveness as the basis of the comical. For people who use it in their everyday conversation, dirty language does not evoke the experience of the comical. The same kind of language, however, employed in a theatre performance or in an anecdote or a joke told at a party when the guests are relaxed after a few drinks may evoke genuinely comical effects. Other common sources of the experiences of the comical are such deviations from linguistic norms as an incorrect pronunciation, a lexical distortion, or wrongly constructed sentences, which are typical of the speech of foreigners or of uneducated people. Dialects and jargons may also be perceived as ludicrous by those who are not used to hearing them daily. The comical likewise arises when the rules of logic are broken. For people who are both familiar with logical principles and accept them, the cases in which they are breached may be very comical. The same character may have an oddity of the points of view, the originality of ideas, a novelty of ways of thinking. It is not only impossible to provide the taxonomy of all the social phenomena capable of evoking the experiences of the comical (the classification of the artistic forms of the comical is an easier task to which I shall address myself in the next part), it is also impossible to enumerate them. However, they all seem to exhibit one common feature in that they are deviations from a norm. (I shall return to the problem of the social role of the comical in Part III).



Notes to Part I

1. T. Boy-Żeleński noticed very accurately that different kinds of the comical compare with each other in the same way as various breeds of dogs do (e.g. compare greyhound and dachshund): in all these different and differing cases what we have to do with is unmistakably still an instance of a dog. Cf. T. Boy-Żeleński, *Śmiech* in *Works*, Vol. 18 (Warsaw, 1959), p. 24.
2. T. Boy-Żeleński holds a different opinion in this respect. Though he admits that "laughter is a notion much broader than the comical" (p. 11) he claims that "it is erroneous to analyze laughter... solely in terms of the comical" (p. 16) and that it is "difficult and artificial" to draw the distinction between the laughter aimed at comical things and its other forms (p. 12). Boy is after a theory of laughter which would cover all of its forms. "The essence of laughter would then be the euphoria and joy which a healthy and well-fed baby finds in experiencing the world; a more or less artificial and momentary return to such a condition is the principle governing the laughter of the adults." (p. 16). I shall return to Boy's conception while discussing the cognitive function of the comical.
3. V. Belinsky, *Polnoye sobranye sochyneny* (Moscow), vol. 5, p. 70.
4. Y. Borev, *O komicheskom* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 23-33.
5. A. Zis, *Lekcii po marxistsko-leninskoy estetike*, Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1964), pp. 143-146.
6. M. Kagan, *Lekcii po marxistsko-leninskoy estetike*, Part I (Leningrad, 1963), p. 103.
7. B. Zawadzki, "Przegląd krytyczny ważniejszych teorii komizmu," *Przegląd Filozoficzny* (1929), p. 17.
8. J. Trzynadlowski, "Komizm", in *Studia Literackie* (Wrocław, 1955), p. 77.
9. A. Zeissing, *Aesthetische Forschungen* (Frankfurt a.M., 1855), p. 272.
10. T. Peiper, "Komizm ekranowy", in *Tędy* (Warsaw, 1930), p. 295.
11. E. Aubouin, *Les genres du risible* (Marseille, 1948), pp. 12-13.
12. Z. Lissa, "O komizmie muzycznym", *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny* (1938), p. 24.
13. J. Kleiner, "Z zagadnień komizmu", in *Studia z zakresu teorii literatury* (Lublin, 1956), p. 100.
14. J. Krzyżanowski, "Komizm w literaturze" in *Studia z dziejów literatury polskiej* (Warsaw, 1949), p. 562.
15. W. Witwicki, *Psychologia*, Vol. 2 (Lvov, 1922), p. 124.

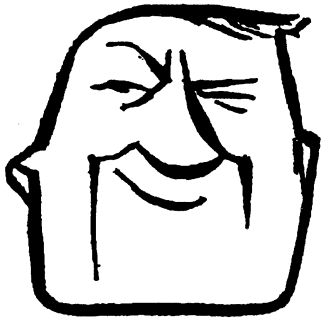
16. M. Collins-Swabey, *Comic Laughter. A Philosophical Essay* (New Haven and London, 1961), p. 4.
17. James Sully, Bohdan Zawadzki, Mieczysław Wallis and Hector Monro present each a different classification of the theories of the comical. J. Sully distinguishes two basic types of theories: 1) the theory of degradation, and 2) the theory of incongruity (cf. J. Sully, *An Essay of Laughter* (London, 1902)). Zawadzki speaks of three groups of the theories of the comical: the theories of contrast (and the related ones), the theory of surprise (and the related ones) the theory of "negative feature" or degradation (B. Zawadzki, *op. cit.*, p. 19). M. Wallis distinguishes the following kinds of the theories of the comical: 1) the theory of unfulfilled expectations, 2) the theory of uselessness and absurdities, 3) the theory for which the source of the comical lies in the victory of matter over spirit and in the triumph of the mechanical, and 4) the theory of impotence (cf. M. Wallis, "O przedmiotach komicznych", *Wiedza i Życie* 5-6(1938), pp. 385-388). H. Monro divides the theories of the comical into four groups: 1) superiority theories, 2) incongruity theories, 3) the theories of release from restraint, 4) ambivalence theories (cf. H. Monro, *Argument of Laughter* (Notre Dame, 1963)).
18. Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. by S. H. Butcher (New York, 1963), p. 59.
19. Th. Hobbes, *Elementy filozofii*, Vol. 2 (Kraków, 1956), p. 142.
20. Stendhal, *Racine i Shakespeare* (Warsaw, 1957), pp. 267, 269, 275, 282, and 286. Also Baudelaire adhered to the theory of superiority and tried to prove in his essay on the essence of laughter that the feeling of superiority is part and parcel of every comical form (cf. Ch. Baudelaire, *Essence of Laughter and Other Essays, Journals and Letters* (New York, 1956), pp. 115, 117, 121, 130).
21. Cf. K. Überhorst, *Das Komische*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 528-533, 542.
22. A. Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (London, 1865), p. 248.
23. A. Stern, *Philosophie du rire et des pleurs* (Paris, 1949), pp. 41, 47, 42, 58.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
26. R. Scruton, *Laughter*, in *The Aesthetic Understanding* (London and New York, 1983), p. 162.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
31. One of the first theorists of the comical to use the expression "contrast" to account for the essence of the comical was German humourist and aesthetician Jean Paul who used this term in his *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (Hamburg, 1804).
32. I. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, transl. by James Meredith (Oxford, 1952), p. 199.
33. H. Spencer, "Fizjologia śmiechu", in *Szkice filozoficzne*, Part II (Warsaw, 1883), p. 116.
34. T. Lipps, *Komik und Humor* (Leipzig, 1922).
35. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

36. I. Chrzanowski, *O komediach Aleksandra Fredry* (Cracow, 1917), p. 93.
37. K. Irzykowski, "Zdobnictwo w poezji", in *Walka o treść* (Warsaw, 1929).
38. H. Hoffding, *Psychologia* (Warsaw, 1911), p. 456.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 455.
40. J. Krzyżanowski, *op. cit.*, p. 563.
41. G. Pospelov, *Teoria literatury* (Moscow, 1940), p. 187. Cf. also Pospelov, *Tvorchestvo N. W. Gogola* (Moscow, 1953), pp. 81-82.
42. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Fine Art* , in Paul Lauter (ed.), *Theories of Comedy*, (New York, 1964), p. 351.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Cf. F. Vischer, *Aesthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schćnen*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1846), pp. 214-218, 334.
45. N. Chernyshevsky, *Esteticheskoye otnoshenie isskustva k deystvitelnosti* (Moscow, 1955), p. 40.
46. N. Chernyshevsky, "Vozvyshennoye i komicheskoye" in *Estetika* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 301-309.
47. E. Evnina, *Rabelais* (Warsaw, 1950).
48. A. Elsberg, *Voprosy teorii satiry* (Moscow, 1957), p. 455.
49. D. Nikolaev, *Smyech - oruzhe satiry* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 21, 20, 98.
50. Zis, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-140.
51. V. Ermilov, "O nekotoryh stranach satiricheskoy poetiki Gogola", *Voprosy literatury* 1(1959), p. 151.
52. L. Timofeev, *Teoria literatury* (Moscow, 1948), p. 82.
53. Y. Borev, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 90, 96, 97.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 73.
59. B. Minchin, *Deyaki pitanya teorii komichnoho* (Kiev, 1959), p. 96.
60. M. Collins-Swabey, *op. cit.*, p. 115. Cf. also pp. 12, 13, 15, 28.
61. A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol. 2, (Leipzig, 1859), p. 99.
62. K. Lemcke, *Estetyka* (Lvov, 1874), p. 97.
63. Kagan, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-104.
64. S. Morawski, *Paradoksy filozofii komizmu*, "Preface" to Henri Bergson, *Śmiech. Esej o komizmie* (Cracow, 1977), p. 34.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
67. M. Clark, "Humour and Incongruity", *Philosophy*, 45(1970), pp. 22-32; "Humour, Laughter and the Structure of Thought", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 23 No. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 238-246.

68. J. Morreall, "Enjoying Incongruity", *Humour*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1989.
69. Clark, "Humour, Laughter and the Structure of Thought", *op. cit.*, p. 238.
70. *Ibid.*
71. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
74. Hoffding, *op. cit.*, p. 456.
75. A. Schaff, "Dialektyka marksistowska i zasada sprzeczności", *Myśl filozoficzna*, 4(1955), pp. 147-151.
76. Peiper, *op. cit.*, p. 294.
77. *ibid.*, pp. 294-295.
78. J. Bystroń, *Komizm* (Wrocław, 1960), pp. 5, 6, 40, 145, 205.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 39
80. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
82. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 39, 47, 113, 268, 189, 280, 284.
83. Trzynadlowski, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
84. Cf. Trzynadlowski's review of J. Elsberg's *Nekotorye voprosy teorii satiry*, in *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, Vol. 3, No 1/4, p. 129.
85. Trzynadlowski, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
88. N. Akimov, *O teatre* (Leningrad, 1962), p. 223. Cf. also J. Ziomek's conception of "an incongruity with a model", "Zur Frage des Komischen", *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, Vol. 8, 1(14).
89. V. Frolov, *Zhanry sovetskoy dramaturgii* (Moscow, 1957), p. 189.
90. Cf. E. Aubouin, *Le genres du risible*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
91. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 16.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
93. M. Naham, *Aesthetic Experience and its Presuppositions* (New York, 1946), p. 513.
94. R. C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire. Magic, Ritual, Art* (New Jersey, 1960), p. 69.
95 J. Sutherland, *English Satire* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 19.
96. V. Propp, *Problemy komizma i smyeha* (Moscow, 1976), pp. 141-153.
97. K. Groos, *Einleitung in die Aesthetik* (Giessen, 1892), pp. 376-378.
98. Henri Bergson, *Laughter*, in Robert W. Corrigan (ed.), *Comedy: Meaning and Form*, (San Francisco, 1965), p. 476.
99. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, transl. by James Strachey (New York, 1963), pp. 90-97. Freud's typology has been recently revived by Don Nilsen who interestingly tried to extend Freud's conception to cover literary humour. He distinguishes "tendentious or supporting humour" which aims "to develop the tendency of the text" and "distracting humour" characterized by its tendency to distract the readers' attention away

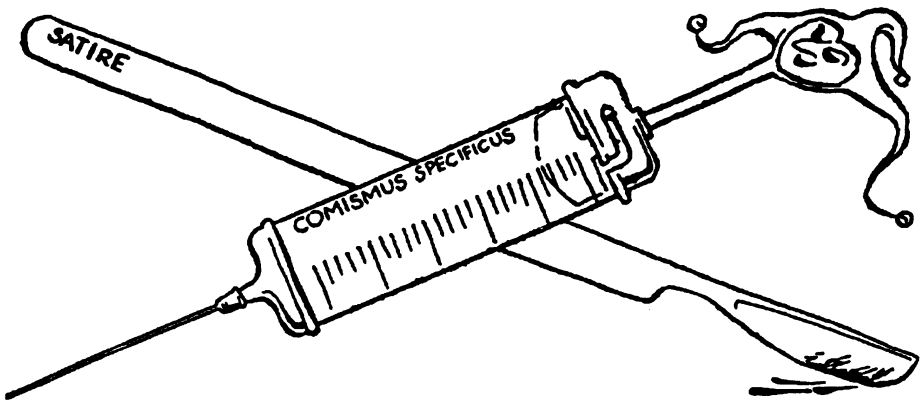
from the text. Cf. Don Nilsen, "The Importance of Tendency: An Extension of Freud's Concept of Tendentious Humor", *Humor*, Vol. 1, No. 4(1988), pp. 335-347.

100. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
102. Ibid., p. 236.
103. Ibid., pp. 154-163.
104. S. Freud, "Humor", in *Character and Culture*, New York, 1963, pp. 263-269.
105. Freud, *Jokes...*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
106. S. Freud, "Humor", *op. cit.*, p. 268.
107. Cf. Ernst Kris, *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art*, New York, 1952, Part III, "The Comic", pp. 173-216; Martin Grotjahn, *Beyond Laughter. Humor and the Subconscious* (New York, 1966). The influence of Freud's theory is visible in many other works on the subject. Cf. for example W. Sypher, *The Meaning of Comedy*, in W. Sypher (ed.), *Comedy* (New York, 1956), pp. 193-258.
108. A. Lunacharsky, *Osnovy positivnoy estetiki* (Moscow-Petrograd 1923), p. 97.
109. A. Lunacharsky, "Jonathan Swift" in *Szkice literackie* (Warsaw, 1962), pp. 78-93.
110. *Ibid.* p. 535.
111. W. Witwicki, *Psychologia*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 194.
112. Z. Lissa, "O komizmie muzycznym" (*op. cit.*), p. 27.
113. *Ibid.* p. 29.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
116. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 33.
117. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
118. Cf. M.Weitz, "The Role of Theory in Aesthetics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 15(1956) and W. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics Rest on a Mistake?", *Mind*, Vol. 67(1958).



Part II

Forms of the Comical



The most difficult question in the theory of the comical concerns ordering, defining and classifying the concepts pertaining to the comical. The difficulties are due not only to the multifarious nature of the comical and to the diversity of its forms but are also caused by the terminological chaos resulting from the semantic confusion as to the notions used to describe the phenomenon.

The problem of the classification of the forms of the comical has been tackled in a number of ways.

The first one employs a number of terms to distinguish and describe the forms of the comical without trying to order them in a hierarchy according to a single principle of the classification. Collins-Swabey, for example, divides the comical into the comical in the narrow meaning, wit, humour, satire, irony, etc. (in her note to this taxonomy she explains that the "etc." includes also the grotesque).[1] Souriau goes along the same line. The obvious fact that they compare phenomena of different orders without specifying the criteria of their correspondence and without keeping the distinctions clear-cut does not bother them at all. Therefore they neglect many important intricacies of the problem such as the case when satire employs irony or, to take another example, when a joke is both funny and satirical.

Another attitude to the problem of the criterion of the comical and its definition located it in the appearance of the comical. Thus Bergson distin-

guishes the comical of situations, words, and characters. This distinction, however, does not satisfactorily distinguish between various forms of the comical. The comical of characters, for example, manifests itself in the situations, actions and the verbal behavior of a protagonist. Another vulnerable spot in Bergson's theory is that he does not classify the notions and concepts typical of the comical. Nonetheless, the importance of such a classification lies in the very search for the criterion of distinction.

The representatives of the third attitude take the structure of the phenomenon of the comical as the criterion of its classification. A good example of this way of thinking is the classification offered by a Bulgarian aesthetician Atanas Natev for whom the major manifestations of the comical go as follows: 1. an automatic quality in living organisms and the schematic quality of a complex phenomenon, 2. an unexpected turn of the action, 3. illogicality in a logical form, 4. the representation of trivia as things of importance and vice versa, 5. an unexpected weakness of the strong and vice versa, 6. an incompatibility with historical truth, 7. the comical of the old-fashioned, 8. the comical of the new.[2]

Natev's taxonomy may be criticized on the grounds that its author does not observe a uniform principle of classification. An example of the position which mixes elements of the second and the third approaches is the proposal by Bystron who tries to marry the criterion of appearance with the criterion of structure. He distinguishes such forms of the comical as 1. the comical of change, 2. the comical of comparison, 3. the comical of relationship, 4. the comical of characters, and 5. the comical of verbal behavior.

Hector Monro's *Arguments of Laughter* contains a similarly inconsistent classification of the comical. Monro divides the comical into the following ten classes: 1. any breach of the usual order of events, 2. any forbidden breach of the usual order of events, 3. indecency, 4. importing into one situation what belongs to another, 5. anything masquerading as something it is not, 6. wordplay, 7. nonsense, 8. small misfortunes, 9. want of knowledge or skill, 10. veiled insults.[3]

The fourth approach aims to order the forms of the comical taking into account their critical intensity. M. Kagan holds that all the forms of the comical fall between the two poles of joke and sarcasm whose artistic correlatives are humour and satire.[4] Kagan, however, resigns from systematic ordering of the forms of the comical which fall in between the two poles. James Feibleman's attempt is therefore more ambitious but at the same time more controversial in this respect. He classifies the types of the comical according to the principle of increasing critical intensity from sheer joy to scorn. In between there are humour, irony, satire, sarcasm, and wit. However, the author does not seem to observe his own principle as when he classifies wit as more critical than sarcasm and satire.[5]

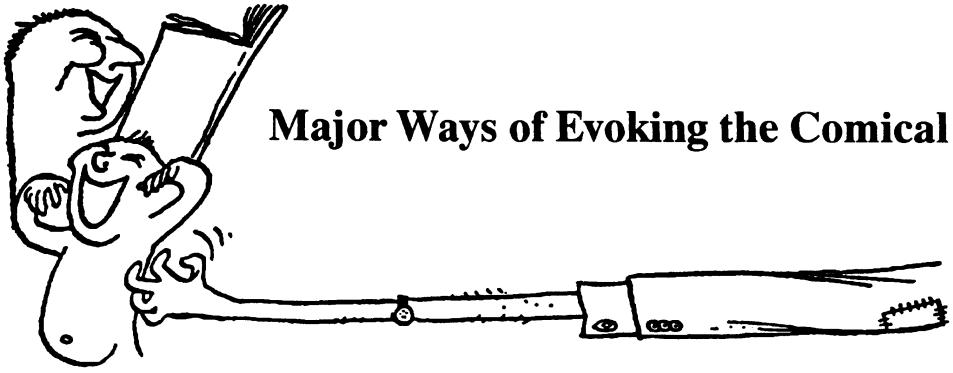
Finally, the fifth approach classifies the forms of the comical on the basis of their complexity and uniformity and is represented by those theorists who distinguish between the primary and uniform manifestations of the comical and its complex forms.

It seems that the classification of the comical should meet the following requirements:

1. The concepts having to do with the comical should be ordered and clarified by having their extension, reference and the position they occupy in the hierarchy defined in order to prevent the concepts belonging to different levels and describing different phenomena from being mixed up.

2. The classification should aim at drawing the distinction between the major forms of the comical which are infected with various views of the world from those manifestations of the comical which are only the means of expression, the techniques of evoking the comical and which therefore may be employed by authors representing different life attitudes.

3. The taxonomy should take into account not only the complexity of the forms of the comical but the intensity of their critical value as well.



Major Ways of Evoking the Comical

All the major means of expressions and the techniques of evoking the comical create phenomena which deviate from a norm and thus stimulate the experience of the comical. Sometimes they invest an existing phenomenon with qualities which give it the stigma of "abnormality." In this chapter I shall discuss briefly the ways of evoking the comical as they are employed in various forms of art.

Deformation and Transformation of Phenomena

Deformation and transformation belong to the most popular and efficient means of creating comical effects.

I. Hyperbolisation. As a way to deform phenomena, hyperbolisation may affect some of their aspects such as their appearance (features, figure, the manner of dress), behaviour (the manners of speaking and movement, gestures, facial expressions), situations, and features of character. In the theory of the comical the technique of hyperbolisation has been associated with various concepts and the differences among them are often mainly verbal in that the same technique has been differently named when applied to phenomena of different orders or to various forms of art. Therefore a brief review of these concepts has no ambition to becoming a fully-fledged logical classification.

1. Exaggeration. Exaggeration is one of the most popular manifestations of the hyperbole, typical of the stories told by hunters or anglers. Exaggeration may find its expression in both the protagonists's utterances and the author's commentaries and has been very often employed in film comedies. In one of his films Harold Lloyd happens to pull carelessly the trigger of a gun and the result is a rain of dead birds. In another early comedy the river overflows the banks when Fatty falls into the water.

2. Hyperbolical caricature. Hyperbole is widely used in caricature which hyperbolizes some, usually negative (as in satirical caricature), features of a phenomenon's appearance or its characteristics. This technique is typical of cartoons, but may be found in other kinds of art as well. Caricature is often applied to describe the appearance of literary figures (Falstaff, Don Quixote, Sobakevich) or in drama (the masks worn by dell'arte actors, masks of an eminent Soviet comedian Raykin, the satirical puppet theatre) or in the cinema (Fernandel, Toto, Fatty, Chaplin's manner of dress). Hyperbolizing a feature of the character or a tendency which has grown to abnormal dimensions and distorts its master's character and subdues him may also count as caricature. Parsimony is such a feature in Harpagon, Gogol's Plushkin and Aleksander Fredro's Łatka; for others it may be jealousy, vanity, etc. This technique has a wide application in both literature and drama and emphasizes the comical aspects of the character. It is also employed to caricature the features of a national character, scientific theories, religious beliefs, moral attitudes, philosophical and artistic currents, dominant social relations or the programme of their reform, etc.

3. Parody. Parody is so akin to caricature that one can say it makes its specific form. Parody blends imitating an original and exaggerating its characteristic features often to the point of absurdity. Yet the success of parody depends on whether the audience is familiar with the object of parody. Parody may concern someone's voice, his manner of speaking, his gestures, his way of thinking, etc. A style or a genre (Cervantes's *Don Quixote* as a parody of heroic epic), a manner of writing (Julian Tuwim's parodies of Polish poetry)

or a particular work (e.g. in John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor*) may be parodied as well.

4. The grotesque based on hyperbole. Hyperbolisation and caricature which go beyond the broadly understood area of the probable towards the fantastic belong to the most significant means of creating the effects of the grotesque. The grotesque is similar to parody in that we can either talk about grotesque elements in a work of art or treat the grotesque as a separate artistic genre which is distinguished on the basis of the means of expression which dominate in works of this kind. As a technique the grotesque, like other means of evoking the comical, may be useful for satire, humourist literature, farce, etc. The area where the grotesque finds employment is not restricted to the comedy production since it is capable of evoking experiences radically different from the comical such as the experience of the tragic or fear. As a genre the grotesque was very popular in the 1950s and 1960s when such authors as Friedrich Dürenmatt, Sławomir Mrożek, Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov or Georg Schehade adapted it as a means of the artistic analysis of the deepest human problems.

II. Diminution. Like hyperbolisation, diminution transforms its object into something deviating from a norm.

1. Travesty (sometimes taken to be a form of parody). Travesty is different from parody (which exaggerates the characteristic, often negative, features of a phenomenon) in that it consists in humiliating, degrading and vulgarizing the features of those phenomena which are taken to be valuable, respectable or even exalted and holy. This method was widely used by Rabelais to ridicule noblemen and monks. He reduced the attributes of their social status such as masses, sermons, prayers, breviaries, frocks to their ordinary earthly proportions. A similar technique was used by Anatol France in his criticism of the Christian tradition and parliamentary democracy (*Thais*, *Penguins' Island*).

2. Diminishing caricature. Diminution is also a form of caricature and thus comes very close to travesty. The far-reaching simplification, which distorts the essence of things by exposing their secondary and trivial features and ig-

noring the essential ones is often used to criticize ideologies, life attitudes, social movements, etc.

III. Changing the Sequence of Otherwise Irreversible Phenomena. Changing the sequence of events is one of the ways of creating a state of affairs which deviates from a norm. Due to the technical possibility of playing the tape backwards this technique is often employed in film farces as for example in Rene Clair's *The Two Shy People* where it was used to present a speech of a lawyer who got nervous, lost the thread of his argument and related his client's affair starting from the end. Interesting comical effects are also achieved with the help of sound deformation. A good example of this technique are the dictator's speeches in Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* which are Hitler's authentic speeches played backwards.

IV. Changing the Tempo. Changing the speed of events is another method of deforming real phenomena in order to produce the comical effect.

Speeding up or slowing down motion pictures which make the movements of the protagonists either excessively fast or too slow are among the basic and the most effective means of achieving comical effects in cinema. In his *Entr'acte* Rene Clair achieved a comical effect by using the speeding-up technique to film a funeral procession. An unintentional comical effect is produced by running old films in the modern tempo. When skillfully used by an actor, an excessive speed or an excessive slowness of speaking may also produce good comical effects.

Diminution, exaggeration, reversing the sequence of events and changing the natural tempo are not unique ways of deforming phenomena in order to produce comical effects. It is not possible, however, to present an exhaustive and fully comprehensive account of all the techniques of producing the comical. What I wish to do is rather to discuss briefly those means of expression which are most frequently employed by the creators of the comical and to show that all of them are examples of deviation from the norm.

Unexpected Effects and Surprising Contrasts

V. Surprise as a Means of Producing the Comical. Chaplin frequently stressed that in his films he was trying to capitalize on the audience's predilection for contrasts and surprises. He says: "I've been trying to manipulate my gestures so that they be seen as surprising. I use a new gag to create a moment of surprise. Take an example: the audience is convinced that I shall walk, but all of a sudden I jump into a carriage. If, say, I want to attract someone's attention, instead of calling him or slapping his arm I use my stick to draw him near. In the first frames of my *Emigrant* I am leaning over the ship's board so that the audience see only my back and my arms which quiver in convulsions and obviously they suppose I am sea-sick. But were this true, it would be a fatal error. Actually, it is a gag because I straighten up and pull out a fish and the audience realize that I wasn't sea-sick but I was only fishing. This total surprise makes people shake with laughter."[6]

Every situation, every consequence which has not been foreseen by the spectator, anything which happens against his expectations and assumptions, anything which *normally* should not have happened, will surprise him. In Evgeny Shvartz's comedy *The Naked King* the prime minister says to the king: "Your Highness is aware that I am an old, honest man who always tells the truth however unpleasant it might be... So, Your Majesty, let me tell you openly and frankly, without any reservations, as an old man may say: Your Majesty is a great man!"[7]

Unexpected conclusions characterize also a number of stories by O'Henry. A great many jokes and stories surprise in the end thus achieving a comical effect. On the other hand, as Artur Sandauer has observed, there are absurd jokes in which the lack of surprise is the surprise.[8] They skillfully manipulate the listener's attention by suggesting to him that something extraordinary and original would follow. Then, instead of the expected unusual situation or a surprising and brilliant point the listener is faced with something banal, ordinary and common.

Another way of producing the effect of surprise in the spectator is to mislead him into having false expectations. This happens, for example, in film comedies when the spectator is presented with a fragment of a picture on the basis of which he imagines what shall come next. But when the perspective broadens the presented reality appears to be completely different from what he has assumed.

VI. Surprising Confrontations and Comparisons of Different or Even Mutually Exclusive Phenomena. An example of such comparisons is showing unusual similarities between a human being and an inanimate object, or between a human being and an animal. This technique is particularly popular with cartoonists (the famous caricature by Charles Philippon showing Louis Philippe as a pear, etc.). It is also used in theatre, film and literature to characterize the protagonists. An example of this is the similarities between the appearance and the character of Sobakevich and the interior of his house, furniture and his everyday objects, or Mayakovski's Prisipkin's similarity to a bug. The comical effects may be also achieved by investing animals with the human features (Aesop and his followers or Walt Disney).

VII. Comparisons Revealing Surprising Similarities between Commonly Accepted Ideas and Absurd and Nonsensical Situations and Views. This technique was very popular with Bernard Shaw who employed it to uncover the absurdity of moral norms and patterns of social behaviour, dominant views, life attitudes, criteria of social evaluation, etc., universally accepted as rational. His later dramas such as *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Islands* or *Too True to be Good* in particular contain such a mixture of the absurd and the common.

The confrontation of the absurd with what is taken to be common and normal does not have to be achieved by means of putting together phenomena of entirely different orders. The same effect may be produced by showing how one phenomenon conceals another one, or how the normal, the common and the everyday hides sheer nonsense (sometimes of huge proportions) or, on the contrary, how one can see the face of normal, everyday reality through the veil of phantasy and pure nonsense.

As an example of the latter we can quote the scene from *Androcles and the Lion* in which Megera who is jealous about Androcles's dance with the lion scolds him and calls him a coward even though he has not danced with her for the last ten years and is now dancing with a beast of whose existence he even did not suspect ten minutes before.

In the fifth part of *Back to Methuselah* the story of which takes place in the year 31920, two automata constructed by Pygmalion the scientist are so bad, deceitful, quarrelsome and murderous that they clearly resemble human beings in the twentieth century.

VIII. Playing Contrasts by Comparing Different, Frequently Contradictory Human Types (Different Appearances, Characters, Temperaments, Habits and Ideas). The persecutors of small and skilful Charlie are always big and clumsy. The partner of tall and slim Pat was small and round Patashon, whereas small, slim, childish and tender Laurel had as his counterpart tall, fat, malicious and despotic Hardy. The first pair of comical characters who were radically different in terms of the physique and mentality were Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. In a similar manner Gogol juxtaposes Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich. A French cartoonist Albert Dubout plays upon the contrast of physical appearances of a married couple in which she is always extremely big, fat, and strong while he is fragile and delicate.

IX. Jokes Based on the Comparison of Naturally Distant or Incompatible Phenomena. Suggesting or emphasizing similarities between phenomena naturally or seemingly very distant makes a kind of a joke, particularly when its form is brief and condensed. For example: friendship and tea are good when they are strong and not too sweet. Another example may be taken from Gogol whose sentences frequently contained things of incompatible character. In his story *The Story of the Quarrel of Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich* Gogol writes: "Contrary to Ivan Ivanovich who is rather fainthearted, Ivan Nikiforovich wears trousers which are so pleated that if you inflated them you could put the whole yard into them together with the granary and other buildings." Heinrich Heine liked this technique equally well. In his *Journey to Hartz* he characterized the inhabitants of Goettingen in the following way: "In

general, the population of Goettingen consists of students, dons, philistines and the cattle, the four orders which by no means are distinct from each other," and continued, "Prayer will not do here, you also need some manure", the parish priest used to say to a farmhand digging his garden. Or another one about a client who was complaining to his Jewish taylor that he needed a month to make a pair of simple trousers while it had taken God only six days to create the world, and the taylor replied: "Well, yes, but just compare this world and these trousers and you'll spot the difference at once."

Revealing Irregularities and Inconsistencies in the Relationships and Correlations among Phenomena

X. Using Anachronisms Concerning Habits, Ideas, Language, Argumentation, etc. A number of authors mix up phenomena that originally belong to different periods of history (Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* or Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*). Similarly, twentieth-century language is spoken by Cain and other protagonists in Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*.

XI. Joining Incompatible Phenomena by Means of a Seemingly Real Relationship.

1. The grotesque based on a constant interchange of realms, the play with the opposites and joining various styles and artistic conventions. The method of combining phenomena belonging to various, often opposite, realms, and of manifold artistic conventions, creates vehement and unexpected changes of references and is a most effective means for the grotesque. This technique may be found, among others, in Ionesco's dramas or in Stanisław Lem's novels and short stories. Vsevolod Meyerhold accepted this principle of the grotesque in his theory of the theatre and put it into practice in his performances which embraced various styles, conventions and novelties such as the masks from the dell'arte theatre, pantomime, ballet, acrobatics, lighting effects, agitation and political commentary, even pyrotechnics.

XII. Creating Situations in Which the Behaviour of a Protagonist is Incompatible with the Circumstances. This method was often employed by Chaplin

who always began with grooming his clothes even if the situation was most dangerous and humiliating. Having returned a kick to his opponent he tipped his hat and only then escaped.

The same principle works in the case of the comical character of Buster Keaton's never changing, mask-like face. In normal circumstances a man's face changes in accordance with external circumstances and his inner life, so if the facial expression never changes and remains serious even in most funny situations, it may, as a deviation from a norm, evoke the experiences of the comical.

Such a technique was already known to Rabelais who employed it while describing the behaviour of Panurg who during the storm at the sea became very pensive and elegiac.

XIII. Inappropriateness of Appearance, Behaviour, the Activity or Some Other Manifestations of the Personality of One and the Same Person. This method of evoking the experience of the comical was popular with Chaplin whose protagonist combined the appearance of a tramp with the manners of a dandy.

XIV. The Incongruity between Illusion and Reality.

1. Showing the incongruity between what a person thinks about his or her own moral, social or intellectual value, and his or her real value is one of the most important methods of creating the comical of characters and is particularly popular in satirical works.

2. A similar role is played by showing *the incongruity between theory and practice, or between what people say and what they do*. This technique is particularly popular in political caricature as a means of disclosing the real military or economic motives hidden behind lofty political declarations.

A classical example of a figure built upon this principle is Tartuffe.

3. Tartuffe may also illustrate *the incongruity between the impression someone makes or intends to make and his or her real character, personality, mood, etc.*

4. The same group of techniques of producing the comical includes the cinematic technique of *the incongruity between word and picture*.

5. Exposing *the incongruity between illusions and dreams and real life* is the major comical motif in *Don Quixote*. This technique is also very frequent in film comedies. For example, a husband who is out hunting thinks warmly about his wife and imagines her doing her housework. However, when the camera shows her at home, we can see that she has got something else on her mind like, for example, cuddling her lover. Another version of the technique was employed in *His Excellence Monsieur Dupont* in which the protagonist had a wonderfully romantic affair with his neighbour. It appeared, however, that the affair was only a dream and that the beautiful neighbour in his arms was only his cushion.

6. Irony (statements in which the real meaning is a negation of the literal sense). Irony's essential feature is a seeming approval or praise which actually masks disapproval or reproach, and, conversely, a seeming criticism which expresses support. In both case, irony ascribes to someone or something a feature which is obviously not exhibited by a given person or a phenomenon and thus makes its absence even more perspicuous. In the case of the comical the ironic effect is achieved by means of the incongruity between the author's subjective commentary and evaluation of his subject and the objective situations as presented by him which in an evident manner suggest that an opposite evaluation would be in place. Most frequently, the discrepancy in question obtains between the approving commentary and the positive evaluation of some phenomena and their plainly negative meaning, but the opposite discrepancy is also to be met. Every satirist and humourist makes some use of irony, but there are authors for whom this technique is of major importance.

In the case of an actor the irony of his utterance may be produced by his intonation which changes the meaning of the words actually spoken. In film irony arises as a result of the discrepancy between the commentary and the actual pictures seen on the screen.

A sarcastic utterance differs from irony only in that is much more intensely venomous, more gloomy in its emotional mood and more cheerless which

leads sarcasm out of the bounds of the comical altogether. Structurally, however, it operates according to the same principle as irony.

XV. The Discrepancy between an Ordinary Use of an Object and Its New and Unexpected Employment. In *The Gold Rush* Charlie is so hungry that he roasts his shoe sole and eats it with visible pleasure, picking the nails as if they were bones.

XVI. The Discrepancy between the Contents and the Form. Frequently, a lofty poetic form is used to describe ordinary, prosaic phenomena (Pope's *The Rape of the Locke*, Jarry's *Ubu le Roy*). Burlesque, on the other hands, takes a serious and sublime subject and presents it in a frivolous and gruff form (works by Paul Scarron). Offenbach's operettas also made use of this kind of the comical as when the time-honoured Greek myths reserved so far for "high" art were treated lightly and frivolously.

XVII. Unnaturally Repetitive Phenomena. A repetition may be effective as a means of producing comical effects only when it is unexpected, unnatural or absurd and gives the phenomena a stigma of the mechanical thus transforming people's movements into those of automata. No one sees as comical the succession of night after day, spring after winter, or the fact that people have their lunch at midday. An intensity of comical repetition grows according to the number of repetitions (one or two repetitions are not enough to be seen as diverting from a norm) yet having reached its peak the comical effect becomes less and less powerful and the repetitiveness of phenomena loses its extraordinary character.

As a technique of evoking the experience of the comical repetition may be employed when either a sentence or a word or a situation are being repeated. The one to master this technique was again Chaplin who made use of it in many of his early comedies.

Creating Phenomena Deviating Actually or Seemingly From Logical or Practical Norms

XVIII. Violating the Norms of Practical Behaviour.

1. Doing something obviously unnecessary and aimless. In Chaplin's comedy *One After Midnight* Charlie gets into his flat through the window, finds his key in his pocket, then goes out through the window again only to open the door to get in.

2. The wrong choice of the means to achieve a given aim. Chaplin's comedies make good illustrations here: in *The Tramp* Charlie waters the garden with a toy-sprinkler; in *The Pawnshop* he opens an alarm-clock with a can-opener.

3. Complicating an obviously easy task. The protagonist of Clair's comedy *Paris qui dort* has invented a wonderful machine capable of putting to sleep the whole city. In order to achieve this effect it suffices to touch one button. But instead of doing this simple operation the protagonist habitually gets involved in complicated and long computations.

4. Awkwardness, shiftlessness, or the lack of basic skills necessary to perform a given action. Awkwardness is often demonstrated by circus clowns or comedians (Tati, Toto, Fernandel). In *The Count* Charlie demonstrates comical helplessness in a simple situation when he is trying to eat a water melon without cutlery.

5. Misunderstanding. This group comprises also misunderstandings which as a rule result from the lack of some skills and from the inefficiency of action.

Creating misunderstandings in order to produce comical effects is one of the most frequently employed methods of evoking the comical. Many vaudevilles, farces and light comedies have their whole plot based upon a succession of misunderstandings (e.g. comedies by Carlo Goldoni). Misunderstandings may result from such factors as mishearing, a slip of the tongue, the lack of knowledge as to the motives of someone's action, mis-interpreted intentions, cheating, too high self-esteem and one's tendency to take words

of praise which refer to other people to be referring to him or her, etc. All these comical misunderstandings either result from exceptional coincidences or divert from the existing notions of the normal and the conventional concerning the efficiency of communication, the competence of the senses, the perceptiveness of the mind. In both cases they represent the diversion from the norm.

XIX. Violating the Norms of Logic. Violations of logical norms in order to produce comical effects abound for example in the works by Gogol where they are to be found in the author's narration, the protagonists's utterances, in the structure of dialogues and in the motivation of the action.

1. Wrong conclusions and false associations. In Gogol's *Inspector-General* we find a fine example of a wrong reasoning which evokes a comical effect: the judge and the postmaster explain the inspector's arrival by the Russian preparations for the war with Turkey.

2. Logical disorder and chaotic utterances. These absurdities manifest themselves most frequently in the absence of logical connections between sentences and their fragments, in unexpected interpolations and changes of the subject, in bizarre sentence structures, in a wrong usage of vocabulary.

3. Creating absurd dialogues with no connection between the protagonists' verbal exchanges. The subjects taking part in the dialogue which often takes the form of a controversy are not able to make use of factual arguments, even though they keep appealing to the common sense of their interlocutor. Often they even do not try to understand what the other wants to say. Often each of them speaks of different things and the logic and the arguments of the interlocutors are mutually incomprehensible.

XX. "Logical" Inversion as a Method of Symmetrically and Oppositionally Inverting the Situations and the Properties of Objects. This method was mastered by Sławomir Mrożek. In *The Policemen*, for example, a police provoker takes on the way of thinking and the arguments of the prisoner while the prisoner's loyalty becomes so great that he starts thinking in police terms. And indeed, in the course of the action they do exchange their roles among themselves. The last prisoner becomes a policeman and thus policemen ar-

rest policemen. Mrożek inverts also the way of thinking as to the law and the offence. He performs a twist on an obvious thesis that without the offender there is no room for the policeman and that the police must exist as long as there is crime, into the thesis that without the policeman there is no criminal and that the criminal's existence depends on the existence of the police. If there are no criminals, the police will have to invent them in order to justify own existence.

In Mrożek's story *Siesta* a number of the members of a communist party committee are devout Catholics so that the committee's secretary must build a small chapel for them in the committee's building and employ a priest. As the committee's employee the priest takes part in the party instruction and finally changes his opinions and becomes a Marxist and a communist. But the party secretary asks him to continue his duties so that the committee's members are not forced to go to the mass in town which would do harm to ideological principles.

XXI. Utterances of a Seemingly Absurd Nature. Many types of jokes fall into this category. Some theorists even go as far as claiming that such is the nature of jokes in general. Artur Sandauer claims that a joke is "a meaningful nonsense" for "its nonsensical form points to a deeper meaning demanding from the listener that he make out the truth hidden behind the distorted form".[9] Sandauer is not alone in his claim and there are authors who go even further saying that "every joke contains some nonsense"[10] or that "every joke breaks the laws of logic and is absurd in a way."[11]

I do not think that the thesis that every joke breaks the rules of logic is right. Indeed, every joke upsets the accepted way of reasoning, but its absurdity is often only ostensible. What creates the impression of absurdity is a very unconventional, surprising and original form of the joke which does not have to be nonsensical even though it seems to be such at first glance. Apart from that there are jokes in which it is not the form of the expression of an idea that is ostensibly nonsensical but the idea itself. It seems that this group of jokes comprises also the paradoxes which express views that are absurd only at first glance but in the last resort appear to be, at least in part, accurate. Be-

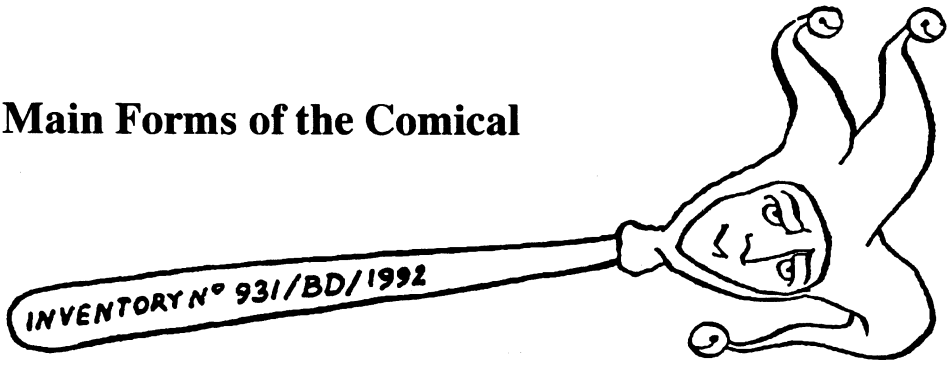
sides that, the evident absurdity of a paradox is not strictly matter of logic but seems to be such from the point of view of common sense logic. And what we call common sense logic is most often simply a synonym of our habits and generally accepted ideas and notions.

The form of paradox was mastered by two authors in particular: G. B. Shaw and Oscar Wilde. In *The Ideal Husband* Lord Goring says: "If there was less sympathy in the world there would be less trouble in the world." (Act III). "In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it. The last is much the worst; the last is a real tragedy!" (Dumby, Act III, *Lady Windermere's Fan*).

My short presentation of the major methods of evoking the comical is far from being complete. Some of them might easily be left out, while some deserve a more thorough discussion. For example, it might be worthwhile to talk more about the verbal means of producing the comical. However, distinguishing a separate group of techniques which produce the comical deviation from norms in the realm of language would be illogical from the point of view of my classification since some of the techniques discussed are employed in the realm of language as well. An extensive and systematic presentation of linguistic means of creating comical effects may be found in Bystroń's monograph.[12] Various manifestations of the comical connected with word-formation have been discussed by Danuta Buttler.[13]

Apart from the description and systematization of some ways of evoking the comical in various forms of the comical production and various realms of art, the final task of my presentation was to prove that the techniques of the comical are different methods of creating phenomena deviating from a norm.

Main Forms of the Comical



The Principles of the Taxonomy of the Main Forms of the Comical

The distinction between the satirical and the humorous comical is the central problem for the classification of various forms of the comical. The problem may be tackled in two ways. The first one consists in the semantic analysis and the attempt to classify the essential concepts used in the theory of the comical in a variety of meanings. The other one begins with an attempt to clarify the criteria of the classification of the forms the comical and their practical application and does not bother about finding properly defined concepts for the particular forms of the comical.

The first method seems doomed to be fruitless simply because of the enormous terminological chaos which characterizes the theory of the comical and those who adhere to this approach are in danger of losing their way in notional ambiguities. Hence my decision has been to follow the other method.

We shall start with tackling the two following problems:

1) Are we justified in distinguishing the "simple," "elementary" and "pure" comical from the "heterogenous" and "complex" one? Are we in a position to give the criteria of such a distinction?

2) Is it always an expression of disapproval or a form of criticism if a person is treated as comical? Is it always degrading and humiliating for such a person? Is laughter which has to do with the comical always an expression of antipathy or aversion?

Problem I. There are artistic works of the comical which concern themselves with simple, superfluous and rather neutral phenomena and which provoke neither sharp value judgments nor any deeper reflection. The experiences which accompany their perception are emotionally uniform in that they are mainly joyful and delicate without anger, indignation, contempt, sorrow, grief, compassion, etc. Such works aim mainly at evoking laughter and giving entertainment. Thus those comical events, situations, utterances, features of persons' appearances and comical works which exhibit such qualities may be classified as manifestations of the simple and pure comical.

The comical of complex nature is to be found in those works which exhibit opposite qualities. Thus they deal with the complex, internal, phenomena which stimulate the spectator to take a reflective and evaluating position. They evoke laughter dyed with such emotions as sorrow, grief, compassion, anger, indignation, contempt, etc.

I shall now review briefly other theories which are comparable with the one presented above.

In the Polish theory of the comical "the pure comical" has been distinguished from "the satirical comical" by Trzynadlowski. He mentions two features constitutive for the pure comical: a) contrary to the satirical one, the pure comical gives the spectator "an individual sense of security", and b) it contains a "neutralizing qualification" while the satirical one contains "active judgement".[14]

A similar position has been adapted by David Worcester who opposes satire and "pure comedy". There are three basic aspects which differentiate pure comedy from satire according to Worcester:

a) pure comedy is characterized by the absence of conceptual coherence and a clear tendency to ridicule things since both the choice of the comical phenomena and the operations of wit are not subdued to any particular end;

b) basically, laughter evoked by pure comedy is neither scathing nor evaluating;

c) the perception of pure comedy does not require any serious intellectual effort since the exclusive aim of this kind of comedy is to bring relaxation and entertainment.

For Worcester the genres which belong to pure comedy are, among others, farce, sketch and extravaganza.[15]

There are similarities between Trzynadlowski and Worcester even though they seem to speak about different aspects of the problem: the former talks about the forms of the comical while the latter talks about the genres of comical works. Both juxtapose pure comical and the forms of the satirical comical. J. Sutherland thinks it necessary to draw a distinction between the comical and the satirical. The differences between the two do not lie in the object of their interest since this is one and the same for both. Both the comedian and the satirist are sensitive to all kinds of human vices, imperfections and follies and both concentrate their attention on those phenomena which deviate from the norms and conventions. What differentiates them is mainly the intention and the attitude taken towards the presented phenomena. The comedian observes but does not judge. He restricts himself to evoking interest, providing entertainment, creating delightful characters or situations which transcend what is taken to be normal. Generally, his attitude is that of a cheerful tolerance and even a joyful acceptance.

The satirist, on the contrary, does not content himself with contemplation but goes on to induce in the spectators a particular kind of attitude towards the objects of his presentation. He aims to stimulate the spectator's mind, shape his attitudes, stimulate, whenever possible, his actions. Hence the art of satire is the art of persuasion.[16]

Chernyshevsky and one of his Soviet followers Valery Kirpotin speak of the primitive comical which may be reduced to external ugliness and has no reflective content. Both authors use the term "farce" to describe this kind of the comical. The protagonists of farce are always only ridiculous and, moreover (notices Chernyshevsky), they do not realize that. What accounts for the difference between Chernyshevsky and Kirpotin is that the latter opposes to farce such forms of the comical as humour and irony[17] while Cher-

nyshevsky sees farce as opposed to humour and wit and treats irony as a form of wit.[18]

As a form of the funny what Chernyshevsky and Kirpotin call "farce" is what Worcester calls pure comedy since farce is for him a form of pure comedy.

Chernyshevsky and Kirpotin, however, lay stress not on the purity and emotional uniformity but on simplicity or even the primitive character of farce. The important difference between Chernyshevsky and Kirpotin on the one hand and Worcester and Trzynadlowski on the other lies in the former's juxtaposition of farce not to one but to two forms of non-primitive comical which do not include the satirical comical.

The simple and pure comical has been most fully characterized by Collins-Swabey.[19] She distinguishes the comical in the narrow sense not only from satire but from such forms of the comical as wit, humour, irony as well. Without getting involved in the discussion of the real value of Collins-Swabey's classification of the forms of the comical we must admit that her proposal opens up a perspective for a satisfactory solution of the problem. What is special about the simple comical may be summarized in four main points:

a) Contrary to all other forms of the comical the simple comical deals with common, superfluous, often vulgar, dissonances and incongruities of everyday life which are neither too urgent nor too uncomfortable;

b) This kind of the comical does not demand any intellectual activity of a higher order;

c) The experience of the simple and pure comical differs from the experience of humour and satire in that it does not involve a strong emotional slant as it is free of both sympathy and antipathy;

d) Unlike satire and irony, the experience of the simple comical yields a spontaneous satisfaction which is not largely mixed with any suffering of a comical object and is free of any derisive slant on the part of the subject of the comical.[20]

In Soviet literature the problem of the comical was discussed in an interesting manner by Evnina in her monograph on Rabelais. On the basis of the

cognitive functions of the comical she distinguished four forms of laughter having to do with the comical.

The first one is a thoughtless and primitive laughter free of the reflection on extraordinary, crass contrasts and dissonances which affect mainly the senses.

The second type embraces humorous laughter which is reflective and generalizing and results from one's realization of the world's manifold character and its contrasts.

The next one is satirical laughter which lays bare the world's contradictions. It is less generalizing and philosophizing than the humorous one but at the same time it is more active and direct.

The last kind of laughter is triumphant as it is evoked either by the victory over contradictions or by an awareness of their inevitable and near defeat. Evnina does not treat this form of laughter in a uniform way. She once classifies it as a form of satire when she says that this kind of laughter is a joyful satire (Rabelais) and contrasts it with the gloomy satire of Swift[21], once claims that this form belongs to the pure comical.[22] According to Evnina, then, the pure comical[23] is represented not only by farce or vaudeville but by joyful, triumphant satire as well.

Instead of classifying the forms of the comical the typology proposed by Krzyżanowski orders the attitudes connected with the creation of the comical. He distinguishes the attitudes ("judgment-reactions") which are either simple and immediate or complex and reasoned. The first type is represented by joviality (simple and immediate, positive) and the satirical (simple and immediate, negative) while humour (negative) and irony (positive) belong to the latter type.[24] From the logical and formal point of view Krzyżanowski's classification leaves nothing to be desired and actually it is the most precise of all the classifications discussed here. Yet it raises some doubts of the terminological and substantial nature. I shall refrain from discussing them till I come to the question of the semantic analysis of the notion of irony.

Problem II. Bergson represented the view that the comical is always humiliating for those who become its object. Therefore laughter can never go together with goodness and affection.[25]

Bergson, however, was not the first one to adhere to such a view. It was Aristotle who defined the ludicrous as consisting "in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive". Comedy for him was "an imitation of characters of a lower type."[26] A similar claim was made by Hobbes for whom the essence of laughter is a "sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly."[27]

The most radical form of such a view as to the nature of comical laughter is to be found in the work of Bain for whom degrading and humiliating the sublime and the serious are the very essences of the comical.[28] Bain's position was later developed by a Polish psychologist W. Witwicki for whom comical laughter was always an expression of joy resulting from a poor or weak condition of a thing or a person whose weakness does not otherwise evoke strong feelings of compassion, horror and disgust.[29] S. Freud may also be counted as a representative of this view since for him the tendentious joke is a sublimation of the impulse of hostility.[30]

A similar view has been popular with contemporary theorists of various orientations such as for example the Polish literary avantgarde leader Tadeusz Peiper or Yuri Borev. Peiper claimed that "the comical is a misfortune which evokes joy" and that laughter expresses contempt for all the socially detrimental deviations from normality.[31] Borev regards the laughter evoked by the comical to be a form of a specific kind of emotional criticism. Thus he argues against Lunacharsky who claimed, among other things, that laughter may blur and attenuate contradictions.[32]

The most important criticism against the views discussed so far is their one-sidedness. It would be unfair to question their accuracy concerning some of the forms of the comical but they definitely do not suffice as an adequate account of all the forms of the comical. Some "degenerations" and deficiencies do indeed evoke the experience of the comical and indeed there are cases

when we are aware of our superiority over the object we are laughing at. In these cases revealing the comical features of a phenomenon and giving it a comical slant results from antipathy or even hostility towards it and aims at criticizing, degrading and humiliating it. Not in all cases, however, does the comical have to do with "relative evil", express disapproval or hostility or try to humiliate its object. We may feel attracted to an object even though, and in some cases just because, it is laughable. Actually it seems possible to classify the protagonists who attract our positive attention and whose characteristics has been achieved by means of comical devices into two groups: those whom we like even though we laugh at them and those whom we like *because* they are laughable. The first group may be further divided into two subgroups.The first one embraces those protagonists who are comical (sometimes even very comical) but not ridiculous and definitely likeable. As an example we may quote Pickwick, Shveik, Juju of Rene Clair's *Porte de Lilas*, the American philosopher-amateur Homer of Jules Dassin's *Pote tin kyriaki*, many characters played by Fernandel, old Stumpy of the *Rio Bravo*, and others.

In the other subgroup we find those characters who are both laughable and deplorable, at times even clearly ridiculed, yet not contemptible but attracting sympathy and warm feelings for their good nature and greatness of soul or at least for their kind-heartedness. Don Quixote opens the gallery of such characters which contains many figures such as for example the majority of Chaplin's Charlies from his mature period.

The second group may be further divided into three subgroups:

a) The first subgroup embraces characters who are not only socially valueless but even clearly immoral and harmful yet whose comicality, instead of bringing contempt or disgust wins them our sympathy. Falstaff or Rabelais's Panurg are very good examples of such characters: even though they are cowards, drunkards, debauchees, we do fancy them.

b) Here we find harmless characters who do not represent any higher values and who would be ordinary, colourless and indistinct had it not been for their comical character. It is their comicality that makes them charming

for us as in the case of Sterne's uncle Toby, Tati's Monsieur Hulot or the protagonists in Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot.*

c) This group comprises characters who are worthy and positive, even embody their author's ideal, yet who are not free of some comical features. Their comicality (sometimes even quite considerable) not only does not reduce our respect for them but actually make them the more likeable. The positive protagonists in Shaw's comedies represent a typical example of such comicality and what makes us laugh is not only their wit but their unintentional comicality as well. Julius Caesar who embodies Shaw's ideal of humanity is not free of some comical features. The same applies to Saint Joan (though in a lesser degree). For all characters of this kind their comicality not only does not reduce our respect for them but in fact makes them so much the more individual and human, more charming and more friendly for the audience.

The typology thus presented is naturally schematic and simplified and the question of whether a particular protagonist has been properly classified is often debatable since many of them do not represent clear types but are a mixture of features belonging to various groups. This problem is not of great importance, however, since my typology is a by-product of the argument with the thesis that comical laughter and sympathy are mutually exclusive, the perception of a phenomenon as comical is always an expression of disapproval and criticism and that comicality involves degradation, etc. What I aimed at was stressing the manifold connections between the comical and sympathy and the variety of functions which these connections have to play.

The arguments in favour of the thesis which I have been defending here may be found also outside the realm of art. In everyday life, for example, if an offender succeeds in making the offended person laugh he is surely forgiven. It is not easy to make someone laugh particularly when the person is angry with us or feels offended, but if we manage to do so we may be certain of absolution. This is possible only when the culprit is close to the person offended as happens in parent-child relationships. Some children are aware of this, regularly and consciously manipulate the situation to their advantage trying to discharge the anger of their parents with a striking and amusing story,

a gesture, a facial expression, etc. and making them laugh thus escaping punishment.

Finally, we may quote the arguments of the theorists of the comical (Hoffding[33], Sergei Rubinstein[34], Belinsky, Kleiner, Aubouin[35], Max Eastman[36]) who protest against reducing comical laughter to derision and defend the thesis that one and the same object may both evoke the experience of the comical and the feelings of friendship and sympathy.

"You may like a man and even respect him, wrote Belinsky, and yet laugh at him ... Oh, thee, the great knight of La Mancha and an unforgettable admirer of unrivalled Dulcinea of Toboso I call to witness."[37]

Bałutowa and Kleiner go even as far as to claim that some forms of the comical slant may make the object more likeable and worthy.[38]

An Attempt to Classify the Main Forms of the Comical

The theory of the comical attaches two distinct meanings to the term "humour": broad and narrow. "Humour" is understood broadly when it is used interchangeably with the term "comical". There are theorists who apply the term humour to all kinds of comical works.[39] Humour is often taken to mean the subjective aspect of the comical (both the capacity to experience the comical and the experience itself).[40] Similarly in the expression "the sense of humour" "humour" is most frequently semantically equivalent to "the comical". What is meant by "the sense of humour" is the aesthetic sensitivity to the stimuli which evoke the experience of the comical.

Many authors make use of the term "humour" in the narrow meaning to signify a specific form of the comical.[41] Finally, "humour" is associated with a specific axiological attitude and a view of the world together with the form of humorous writing which expresses them and whose very important component is the comical. In these two last, related meanings humour, due to its permissiveness, tolerance, and reflective character is, on the one hand, contrasted with militant and uncompromising satire and the primitive forms of the comical connected with farce and vaudeville, on the other.

For the purpose of clarity it seems better to restrict the meaning of the term "humour" when compared with the meaning of "the comical", the more so that the functions of the concept of "humour" are much more precisely accounted for by the use of such expressions as "the sense of the comical," "the experience of the comical," "the works of the comical," and, secondly, that such a restriction is justified by a linguistic habit not less frequent in the literature on the subject than the habit of broadening the meaning of this term.

Defining humour as one of the forms of the comical is accurate only as a form of an abbreviation. It is more accurate to tie humour in with the author's attitude towards the world, an attitude dyed with a sense of the comical, and with the humorous writing in which such an attitude is most fully expressed.

The fact that some forms of what is called "humour" cannot be reduced to the comical makes a good argument for such an interpretation. Some forms of humour are no longer comical in the pure sense for they tie the experience of the comical with solemnity, sorrow, melancholy or the sense of the dramatic. We find this kind of humour in Gogol and Chekov, for example.

The word "satire" is used to denote either the form of the comical equivalent to humour or works representing a distinctly critical attitude towards its objects and thus representing a type of the comical different from humorous writing. The following classification of the forms of the comical takes into account the results of our previous discussion and of the provisional semantic analysis.

Taking as the criterion emotional complexity and the presence of evaluation and reflection, we can distinguish two basic forms of the comical. The first one is the primitive comical of the farce and vaudeville type which goes without evaluation and reflection, and is often carelessly joyful, even vulgar.[42] The other form of the comical is complex, satirical-humorous, reflective and evaluating and may further be divided into two attitudes: humorous and satirical and two kinds of works: humorous writing and satire. This distinction is based on the attitude of the authors to the objects of the comical.

The humorous attitude is passive and non-aggressive, more contemplative and philosophical. Humour typically sees the absurdities of the world and

human deficiencies as something necessarily acceptable which must be treated indulgently. Satire, on the other hand, is characterized by its uncompromising and constant struggle against all evil and by the absence of leniency and tolerance.

The "satirical comical" and the "humorous comical" were seen as two major forms of the comical by Leonard Stolovich.[43] A similar position has been adapted by many theorists of the comical though many of them use different expressions. Lunacharsky[44] and Minchin[45], for example, claim that satire and humour are two basic aesthetic attitudes towards the real taken on the grounds of the comical. Krzyżanowski calls humour and satire "judgments, reactions" equivalent to irony and joviality. For Borev and Morawski[46] satire and humour are the main forms of the comical. Others such as George Meredith, Joseph Müller[47], Etienne Souriau[48] and Marie Collins-Swabey[49] classify humour and satire along with such forms of the comical as irony or the comical in the narrow sense, etc. Lipps[50] and Kleiner divide not the comical but humour into three major kinds: satirical humour (aggressive and angry), humour in the proper sense (lenient and tolerant) and ironic humour.

All these conceptions characteristically put together, at times even draw a contrast, between satire taken as

a) a form of art - and humorous writing,

b) a form of the comical - and humour,

c) satirical humour - and its lenient and tolerant form.

Some authors, however, do not draw such a comparison, i.e., either do not treat satire as a form of the comical (eg. Chernyshevsky[51] who distinguishes only three forms of the comical: farce, wit and humour) or treat the relationship between the notions of humour and satire in terms of inclusion with the superiority of "humour" as the most popular option (e.g., Eastman[52], Jan Kalina[53], Stephen Potter[54] who define satire as a form of humour).

Bergson, on the other hand, represents an opposite view, for he interprets humour (and irony as well) as a form of satire.

My classification does not treat irony as a separate and individual form of the comical, even though there are many classifications which take irony as standing alone.

Among those conceptions which treat irony as a separate form of the comical there are three basic positions:

a) Meredith, Müller, Lipps, Souriau, Krzyżanowski, Kirpotin, Kleiner, Collins-Swabey and others mention irony alongside satire and humour.

b) Chernyshevsky and Rubinstein mention humour and irony alongside other types of the comical which do not, however, include satire.

c) Finally, Schopenhauer[55] and Bergson compare only humour and irony.

The necessity of distinguishing irony as a form of the comical from both the elemental comical on the one hand and humour and satire on the other has been best justified by Collins-Swabey who claims that satire is the form of the comical closest to irony. What makes them akin to each other is that contrary to humour they express criticism and condemnation and contrary to the comical in the narrow meaning they are intellectual in character and have an emotional slant.

These similarities, however, do not exclude differences between them. The business of satire is to criticize and reform. With a considerable emotional and intellectual involvement it censures the evil and injustices trying to excite in the audience anger and a negative judgment concerning the phenomena ridiculed.

Irony uncovers mainly ignorance and stupidity. Its tone is cooler and quieter, lighter and more intellectual. It tries to stimulate independent reflection, arouse critical emotions rather than appeal to the sense of justice, condemn the wrongs and moralize.[56]

What Collins-Swabey seems to be suggesting is that irony occupies the middle ground between humour and satire. Irony is more aggressive than humour but less militant and less socially engaged than satire. On the other hand it is more intellectual than satire, yet still less reflective and emotionally complex than humour. Such an account of irony as a transitory form between satire and humour is also supported by other authors.

If we accept this thesis then it seems the more so desirable to distinguish such an intermediate position. It has be en presented by such authors as O. Wilde, W. Gombrowicz, and partly by A. France, B. Shaw and F. Dürrenmatt (*Romulus the Great* in particular), A. Słonimski and S. Mrożek. Because of their aggressively sneering attitude towards human relations, habits and myths and their strongly emphasized sense of their own worth, these authors are no longer humourists in the strict sense, but at the same time they are not satirists, either, for they openly keep off social criticism and do not put forth any positive ideal. Their position seems therefore to be what some theorists call irony.

The possibility of distinguishing an intermediary attitude between satire and humour does not entail that irony becomes a separate form of the comical, analogous to humour and satire.

While the words "humour" and "satire" (or more precisely satirical tendency) denote an evaluating attitude containing some ideological elements which finds its expression in some kinds of art (satire and humorous writing), irony is essentially a technique of evoking the comical of use in both satire and humorous writing. It is a masked mockery in which the proper yet hidden sense is a negation of the literal meaning. Norman Knox claims that irony is "saying the contrary of what one means." Irony, in his opinion, is blame by praise, and - less popular, but equally justified - praise by blame.[57] Therefore it is wrong to negate the existence of facetious irony. Irony is not malicious by definition. It may well be joking and good-hearted in its character.

Borev interprets irony in a similar way. Comparing irony and mockery he defines the former to be a subtle derision masked with seeming approval. For Borev irony may be a weapon of satire but it may also display a humorous, friendly character. What links irony which attacks its enemy deceitfully with derision which ridicules its adversary in an open manner is the comical allusion. Like irony ridicule may appear as a result of either a satirical or humorous attitude to the existing reality. Humorous ridicule makes a joke. Particularly malicious irony is sarcasm.[58] To complement Borev's considerations we may add that exceptionally painful and malicious ridicule is derision.

It seems most likely that there are two factors which facilitate the separation of irony into an individual form of the comical and the negation of the existence of facetious irony: the fact that indeed irony more frequently goes together with mocking, malicious laughter, and the ambiguity of everyday language which in some way affects the terminological distinctions of the theory of the comical. In everyday use irony and mockery are not as a rule separated from each other and thus every malicious and mocking attitude is called ironic.

It is obviously possible to classify the forms of the comical or the forms of art concerned with the comical taking as the criterion the technique or the means of expression which are most characteristic of such a form. Having once accepted the criterion, however, one must stick to it and follow it consistently. Dividing the comical into humour, satire, irony, the grotesque, caricature, wit, parody, etc., violates the basic principles of logic observing neither the rule of exclusion nor the principle of the uniformity of the criterion which governs the distinctions in all its aspects. Such a procedure resembles a distinction of human kind into men, women, dark-haired people, blondes and students.

Our distinction uses a dichotomy of division:

There are three basic attitudes concerning the comical of a complex character: humourist, satirical, and intermediate (which cannot be accepted as traditionally satirical even though it contains elements of disapproval). The last one might be called mockingly ironic, or, as K. Wyka suggested, derisive. Wyka interprets derision as a militant, unmasking, suspicious and skeptical attitude which does not, however, juxtapose the phenomena ridiculed with any ideal of its own. "Derision testifies to the fact of both having noticed the evil and being helpless in removing its causes."[59]

The intermediary attitude may certainly be interpreted as a form of the satirical attitude. Terminological distinctions, important as they are, do not have to blur the essence of the problem. What is important is drawing the distinction, within the framework of the comical, of disapproval between the at-

titudes represented by, say, Wilde and Gombrowicz, on the one hand, and Swift and Mayakovsky, on the other.

One should not forget that the attitudes distinguished here make ideal types and that the borders between them should not be treated in absolute terms. In actual artistic practice rarely do we find these attitudes in their pure form. The same author may represent various attitudes and may also variously reveal them.

Humourists and scoffers, for example, wrote excellent satirical works. To quote but a few: Chekov's short stories such as *The Mask* or *The Chameleon*, Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* or *The Widower's Houses*, Twain's sharp satire *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg* or some short stories by Mrożek (eg. *Lion*, *A Soldier's Monument*).

One and the same work may treat some phenomena in the satirical manner and some others in the humorist one. It is even possible to have a dual, satirical and humorous, treatment of the same phenomenon. The whole spectrum of the attitudes from satire to humour is to be found not only in works by the authors quoted above but also in Gogol, Hasek, Chaplin, Brecht. There are excellent satirical parts in *Pickwick Papers* (the elections) or in Christian-Jaque's *Fanfan-la-Tulipe*.

The author's attitude towards reality, which yields the objects of the comical, is defined not only by objective factors but by subjective ones as well. It depends on the nature of things which attract his attention, on the extent to which they deviate from the norm and on whether the norms they deviate from are socially important or not. The satirical attitude feeds itself on phenomena which deviate from the norms of social relevance and thus become the source of social evil. What determines satire, then, is the perspective of overcoming the evil. The author's attitude is also defined by his ideology, his social opinions and by the individual predispositions of his psycho-physical personality. One can consciously ignore evil, or be incapable of protest because of individual mental and emotional preferences, or, on the contrary, pass too severe judgments on innocent vices and weaknesses.

It is necessary to distinguish between the principal forms of the comical which express a life attitude and those elemental forms of the comical which are basically the means of expression, the devices for, or the techniques of, evoking the comical such as irony, wit, joke, caricature, parody, the grotesque, travesty, etc. The same means may be employed in satirical works, humorous writing, farces and vaudevilles. The application of particular techniques of the comical is determined by the subject matter, the richness of the established means of expression and finally by the individual predispositions and preferences of the artist.

Satire and Satirical Comical

Satirists frequently use deformation, caricature, hyperbole and the grotesque. Some theorists are inclined to think that caricature and the grotesque are indispensable elements of any militant, suggestive and expressive satire.

It seems that the constitutive features of satire (using the term in its modern broad meaning) are to be looked for not in the realm of the formal properties of a work (the realm of the means of expression) but in the sphere of the author's ideological and emotional attitude to the phenomena ridiculed. The classification of a given work as satirical depends on whether it uncompromisingly and aggressively ridicules and discredits the phenomena which form its subject matter.[60] If this tendency is dominant in the work then it may undoubtedly be called satirical. At the same time some works of a non-satirical character may only be dyed with satirical tendencies.

Moliere, G. Zapolska, H. Mann and Chekov (to quote but a few examples) employ the grotesque in their satirical works very rarely. In the plastic arts satire may also do without the grotesque (cf. for example the satirical cycles by William Hogarth or H. Bildstrup). Bertold Brecht does not employ the grotesque in *The Threepenny Opera*, either. Thus the grotesque makes neither a necessary nor the exclusive feature of satire (it may be found in vaudeville and tragedy as well).

The development of modern art testifies to an enormous popularity and flourishing of the grotesque and other means of deformation. We may not like it but we cannot negate its existence.

The parabolical, the fantastic or the grotesque form of a satirical work produces more associations, deepens the meaning of the work and broadens the range of possible interpretations so that an intelligent reader may use his imagination to fill the work with an interesting content which may astonish the author himself. Yet such a form, being semantically ambiguous, may also make the work too general, shallow and thus ineffective.

From the point of view of the emotional slant satire may be divided into the angry and sarcastic type of a gloomy character (Juvenal, Swift, Goya, Honore Daumier, William Thackeray, George Grosz, D. Moor) and satire which is triumphant and joyful (Rabelais, Mayakovsky, Pierre Chenal in *Clochemerle*, Pietro Germi in *Divorce Italian Style*).

Such a classification of satire was proposed also by Gilbert Highet in *The Anatomy of Satire*. Highet claims that the two forms of satire differ also as to the interpretation of the aim of satire. The optimistic satire heals and persuades, while the pessimistic one hurts, punishes and destroys. Highet accounts for the difference in question by reference to various mental predispositions, personal preferences and the good or bad character of the satirists themselves.[61] The satirist of the optimistic character such as, for example, Horace has a lot of love for the world and people and believes that human vices are produced by ignorance. On the contrary, the pessimist, for example Juvenal, is a misanthrope who hates and despises mankind. He is far from believing that healing people's stupidity and vices makes any sense and is convinced that the evil is rooted in the nature of man and in the social structure.

An interpretation such as this is one-sided and tendentious. It is one-sided because it does not take into account such an objective factor as the social context; it is tendentious, for it tries to reduce the significance of great satirists as Juvenal, Swift or Daumier to their misanthropy interpreting the ruthlessness and venomousness of their satire in terms of their bad inclinations, dif-

ficult character, personal failures, etc. (I shall return to this problem in Part III when talking about the social significance of the comical.)

However, those theorists who refuse to take into account the role of the author's personality and his mental inclinations also seem to be wrong.

Evnina goes along similar lines in her classification of satire and claims rightly that the differences between the two kinds of satire cannot be reduced to the differences of the inclinations and the mentalities of the satirists but are by and large determined by a variety of the perspectives for the victory of the ideal which the author is fighting for and the difference between them originates in that one satirist does not see any chances of introducing changes in the order of things which he criticizes, while the other is assured as to the forthcoming victory.[62]

Evnina's arguments seem convincing. In the realm of satire which as a rule is socially engaged such objective factors as the strength of the evil ridiculed and the perspective of the victory of the ideal do play a greater role than in other kinds of art. This position, however, does not imply that subjective factors are no longer to be taken into account. Yet the authors discussed so far have not directed much attention to this aspect of the problem. Personal inclinations and preferences have their say not only in determining which of the technical means of expression are employed, but in giving colour to the tone of the satirist's work as well.

Even though Chekov and Saltykov-Shchedrin were contemporaries, the tone of Chekov's satirical short stories clearly differs from the tone of the latter's satire. Unlike Saltykov-Shchedrin's work which is dominated by anger and indignation, Chekov's stories are characterized by contempt for social evil which is the stronger, the more impartial and seemingly composed the narrator is.

What is important is that the satirist deliberately deploys the weapon of laughter against his object. Seen in this perspective, the means of expression he uses and the emotions of disapproval (whether indignation, anger or contempt) which dominate in his work are of a lesser importance and are only used to classify the given work as a particular type of satire. The satirist al-

ways strongly criticizes and ridicules his objects but the particular tasks which he sets for himself may differ according to the particular situation and the character of the phenomena ridiculed.

The criterion of the formal conventions and of the dominant and typical means of expression gives us good reason to distinguish two forms of satire:

a) satire in the convention of the grotesque, represented by Swift, Rabelais, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Goya, Mayakovsky, Ionesco (*Rhinoceros*), Brecht (*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*), Chaplin (*The Great Dictator*), and others;

b) satire in the convention of realism (probability) to be found in Moliere, Shaw, Chekov, Guy de Maupassant, Hogarth, Thomas Rowlandson, and others.

This taxonomy of satire is not unique. In literary criticism, for example, satire is often divided into political satire, social satire and the satire of manners whereas some other scholars divide it into "great" satire and "small" satire.

Humorous Writing and the Humorous Comical

The humorous comical addresses mostly those phenomena which deviate from commonly accepted or postulated social norms and the concepts of the normal but which are not at the same time dangerous or harmful. The extent of their deviation is minimal or they deviate from the norms of secondary importance, such as laughable weaknesses and such vices and deficiencies as are usually inseparable from virtues and worth. Chernyshevsky[63] observed quite rightly that weaknesses and deficiencies of character may make inseparable qualities of an interesting, worthy and likeable personality. Indeed, punctiliousness often comes with the sense of duty and order; quick temper and hastiness may result from sensitivity and vivacity of temperament; an amicable attitude to wrongs grows from leniency and tolerance; hesitancy and suspicion often go together with deliberation and sagacity, or, on the contrary, trust and the belief in people's goodness borders on credulity, whereas an intellectual treatment of things may result in emotional dryness, and intensive mental activity may produce absent-mindedness.

The humourist takes interest in phenomena which are relatively bad or relatively good, ie. those in which good and evil, greatness and smallness become inseparably mixed. The phenomena may be evidently valuable, yet the humourist notices some deficiencies in them, or they may seem completely ridiculous and base and yet contain some hidden values. This feature has been accepted by many theorists as specific to humorous writing. This thesis, however, is interpreted in many ways. Some theorists claim that the things of relative beauty and relative goodness are the basis of humour and that a humourist's task is to detect them under the thick layer of all sorts of deficiencies, ie. where no one would think they might be found.[64] Others think that the proper object of the humorous creation is not the realm of relative worths but relative, harmless and secondary vices and that the humourist's task is to criticize them in a friendly manner.[65]

These differences are far from being irrelevant. The result they produce is a variety of final judgments and reactions. The dominant reaction in the first case is of approval, while in the other, on the contrary, it is the reaction of disapproval, even though frequently mild and inoffensive. It seems that both attitudes found their expression in works by prominent humourists without at the same time exploding the concept of the humorous creation altogether. The acceptance of just one of these theses would unnecessarily restrict the extension of the humorous creation and would compel us to distinguish one more aesthetic attitude concerned with the comical. We can avoid these difficulties if we accept that the object of humorous writing is both relative goodness and relative wrongs. In the same way such a move will allow us to accept as humorous not only the attitude of moderate approval but the attitude of mild disapproval as well. Harsh and unsympathetic disapproval will result in a satirical or mocking attitude. Important as it is, the object of the humorous creation is not the only factor determining its character. We shall not overlook those subjective factors which add up to the concept of the humorous attitude and consequently have their say in defining the character of humorous writing.

Undoubtedly, the sense of the comical is one of the subjective conditions both of experiences of the comical and, even more, the capacities to produce them. The sense of the comical is often imprecisely called the "sense of humour". The latter expression should be reserved for a specific form of the sense of the comical typical of humourists in life and art. One who has a sense of humour in the narrow meaning laughs at the absurdities of the world and human weaknesses but does not strongly oppose them realizing that he himself is not free from vices and laughable deficiencies, either. A person of such a character neither experiences extra-cognitive self-satisfaction towards at least some of the comical objects nor feels superior when he experiences the comical. Secondly, such a person takes it easy if someone mocks at him in a friendly way, sometimes he mocks at others and shows no narrow-minded pride which jealously defends its dignity and finds deadly offence in every joke. Finally, he is capable of taking a joyful, facetious attitude to those things which are not always joyful without any tragic notes. In the opinion of Stefan Szuman, "The person who has a sense of humour does not treat too seriously either the deficiencies and vices of human nature nor its ... excessive ambitions."[66]

Many authors, psychologists in particular, treat the humorous attitude in broad terms of *Weltanschauung*. Hoffding[67] claims that humour may be something more than a mood and goes on to suggest that it may be a form of understanding, a view of life. For Szuman "humour is a philosophy of good temper. Humour is neither a good mood nor the mere conviction that things should be treated with humour, but is a mood which bestows on us the power of positive convictions and the conviction capable of evoking in us the power of good temper."[68] Rubinstein says a similar thing when he claims that humour is one of the emotions connected with *Weltanschauung* which combine the sphere of emotions with the realm of intellect and have a specifically cognitive role to play. He emphasizes that emotions of such a kind differ from individual feelings of enchantment, disgust, love or hate towards a particular object. Thus understood humour makes an enduring stance of one's

personality which also comes to the surface as an individual feeling concerning particular phenomena.[69]

The features characterizing the humorous attitude may be grouped into three classes:

a) The humorous attitude is contemplative, reflective and passive. Aubouin writes that "The humourist does not accuse, sentence, or classify people into 'good' or 'bad' but shows them as they really are, together with their virtues and vices," writes Aubouin.[70] The view which takes the humorous attitude to be not an attitude of a judge or of a militant but of a thinking observer is popular with other theorists as well (eg. S. Brewer, M. Collins-Swabey, and many others).

b) Humour is an attitude which combines objectivism with moderate relativism. It does not concentrate solely on vices and virtues. It shows the world in accurate proportions and does not generalize hastily. It opposes both extreme pessimism and negation and limitless optimism. Moritz Carriere[71], Chernyshevsky, Hoffding, Rubinstein and Szuman are the authors who interpret humour in such a manner.

c) The humorous attitude is lenient and tolerant, good-natured and forgiving. Wyka characterizes the humorous stance in the following way: "Humour is a forgiving stance. A really great humourist sees the necessary meanness of human deeds or motives yet exculpates them and finds such an order for them which is capable of accommodating them. Laughter expresses here a lenient and forgiving reconciliation."[72] From what has been said about the object of the humourist creation and the humorous attitude it is not difficult to characterize the humorous creation and the humorous comical.

The humorous comical is heterogenous and complex. The experiences evoked by a humorous work rarely become the experience of the comical in its pure form. Like the satirical comical, the humorous comical frequently goes together with extra-comical experiences and emotions such as the feeling of the dramatic, the tragic, melancholy, solemnity or pensiveness. Humorous works strangely mix emotions, views and moods of opposite meanings. Mockery comes with compassion, wit with a serious thought, facetious-

ness with sorrow. The humorous comical is a mixture of wit and love (Thackeray). Indeed, contrary to satire, the humorous creation is free from malice and aggressiveness. Even criticizing, the humourist remains lenient, tolerant and friendly. This may change when in some situations he quits the humorous stance and becomes a satirist. Finally, the humorous comical is reflective, the feature which differs it from the comical of farce and vaudeville.

This feature of the humorous comical has been stressed by Evnina. Her argument starts with the assumption that laughter is a human reaction to the processes and phenomena of existing reality. If such is the case, then various stages of the cognition of reality are complemented by different forms of laughter. Contrary to a primitive, thoughtless laughter which is a reaction to some sensuous stimuli (awkward movements, bizarre clothes, funny grimaces, etc.) humour answers this stage of cognition when a human being begins to notice the relations among things, becomes aware of the contrasts and disproportions of reality and generalizes them. Evnina is the only Soviet theorist of the comical who sees the differences between humour and satire in the greater universality of humour and in its philosophical engagement which does not necessarily appear in satire. In her opinion satire, contrary to humour, does not have to be universal but may address itself to an object chosen at random. That is why folk satire which has to do with particular, concrete vices of the social milieu is historically prior to the subtle and universalized humour of the philosopher. In this respect denouncing laughter may be more restricted and poorer than humour though at the same time it is sharper and apter.[73]

Like satire, humorous writing is heterogenous both in terms of the dominant tone and emotional slant and in terms of formal properties. In respect of tone and emotional slant one can talk of serene, optimistic humour (Ch. Dickens, Jerome K. Jerome, O'Henry, Romain Rolland in *Colas Breugnon*, Rene Clair, Joseph Heller, Z. Lengren, Jean Effel, Ephraim Kishon, and others) and melancholy humour sometimes called the humour through the tears (Gogol, Zoshchenko, Chekov, B. Prus, Sholom Aleichem, Chaplin, Woody Allen). The characteristics of humour given by Sretenski apply only

to this kind of humour: "In all his variations - from soft kindness to dark, yearning reflection - humour is a depressive laughter reflecting the awareness of contradictions which leave an individual powerless. The laughter of humour is defensive and saves consciousness from total catastrophe and tragic despair. Humour brings compassion to the oppressed, but compassion which is passive."[74] Yet this characteristics describes accurately only the humour through tears and does not apply to its optimistic version which is much broader.

Modern Satire and the Humour of the Absurd

Like all other forms of art, satire also changes, too. Modern satire differs from the satire of Horace or Juvenal mainly by its having broken the confines of one literary genre and even of literature as such. This fact has already been accepted as obvious and we do not have to talk about it. There is another question, however, of whether there are any important differences between modern satire and the satire of, say, the nineteenth century, or whether its modern version has some specific individual features. And if it is accurate to draw a line between modern and traditional satire another question arises of where their specific features are to be found: in the content of satirical works or in the sphere of their means of expression, their form.

It goes without saying that social, technological and cultural changes involve at least partial change of the objects of satire and that this fact is surely reflected in the content of satirical works. It is a matter of the natural course of things that some manifestations of evil disappear, some new ones are born along with the transformations of existing reality and of the criteria of evaluation. Consequently, some things which did not meet our disapproval now may do so, and conversely, the phenomena interpreted so far as negative may now be evaluated in a different manner. The conflicts and the problems which used to engage our attention lose their importance and give place to new ones. This is not the only source of changes in satire, however. Equally important is the evolution of the ways in which the satirists evaluate the real. Their ways of interpreting the real and of ordering the negative phenomena together with

their ideas concerning the ends of satire and the convictions as to the necessity and the efficiency of opposing the given phenomena undergo constant changes as well.

Twentieth century satire treats the question of manners and of individual moral behaviour (e.g., the family life) as less important. Some theorists (eg. Sutherland) claim that rather than emphasizing the life and behaviour of an individual, modern satire is much more interested in mankind and that satirists are nowadays less concerned with the vices of particular individuals than with the destiny of humanity, its possible extermination or its moral degeneration.

Less frequently than before modern satirists moralize and preach, less frequently try to denounce and censure moral offenses of a fully responsible individual. Instead they concentrate on situations in which it is difficult to determine direct responsibility and guilt and in which those who are guilty are numerous and their responsibility is neither objectively nor subjectively absolute. They are also interested in the determinations exercised by social relations, institutions or other human products which escape human control and independently of human will exert their laws and requirements upon people. Modern satirists are often interested not so much in absolute evil and in its censoring as in its origins and in those cases when evil loses its absolute character and when the line between the positive or the neutral and the negative gets blurred and cannot be immediately determined. Their position is no longer that of militant moralists well acquainted with pure good and pure evil but of observers and philosophers who search for the causes and the mechanisms of negative phenomena and processes and for the border between good and evil not only in order to censure and combat them but first and foremost to make people aware of the truth, compel them to think, shake them, scare them, shock them so that they might feel obliged to take an action against the wrongs. In general, then, modern satire becomes intellectualized and reflective at the cost of losing its moral and militant edge. This, of course, applies not to the so called "small" satire which intervenes in everyday problems but to the "great" satire of high ambitions.

However, we would not be justified in generalizing that only the problems mentioned above are typical of modern satire and that the traditional themes and satirical attitudes are out-dated and have lost their topical character.

As I have already observed, the features typical of modern satire may be found not only in the contents of satirical works. I shall now try to locate the specific features of modern satire, its typical means of expression and stylistic devices in the realm of artistic form and stylistic convention.

Modern satire rarely makes use of invective, open mockery or derision and rarely expresses its judgment, indignation and contempt directly. More frequently, its means include allusion, symbol, metaphor, understatement, irony, the elements of the fantastic and the grotesque and do not observe the principle of probability. Where satire employs the conventions of realism the satirical effect is achieved by means of a seemingly objective and unbiased yet easily decipherable presentation of facts. But even in this case the author does not directly compel the addressee to accept his negative attitude to the phenomena presented but tries to induce their negative attitude without passing any direct judgments.

Oleg Sus claims that the present moment is too dynamic and restless, too abundant in contradictions and social, political, intellectual and emotional extremes to be presentable by means of traditional, conventional forms of the satirical comical making use of the standard, descriptive imagery. To present the essential framework of the modern situation of man and to uncover the complexity of existing reality satire must make use not of the comical of situation or the verbal comical but of such powerful means as the grotesque, fantasy and the absurd.[75] A similar though more moderate position is represented by a Polish literary critic Elżbieta Wysińska for whom the grotesque makes "a modern manner of seeing the world" and the means of the grotesque unveil "the characteristic features of modern conduct." The author, however, is aware that the use of the grotesque by no means guarantees the modern character of satire. It is true that "the means of the grotesque facilitate the expression of the contradictions of our conduct. Conversely, however, we cannot exclude the fact that it is easier to talk about reality using

appearances. ... The grotesque is by and large a manner of thinking about things and thus cannot substitute for them."[76]

The doubts raised by Wysińska are justified and to the point. Modern satire is indeed very fond of the grotesque and the parable. The question, however, is why that is so? To what extent does the development of this kind of satire result from the necessity of finding adequate means of expression for new phenomena, conflicts and problems and not from artistic fashion or the influence of ideology? The power of suggestion and fashion do exert their influence upon artistic circles so that the need to find adequate means of expression for problems which cannot be articulated in the convention of probability is surely not the only source of the popularity of the grotesque. The conviction that modern satire is possible only in the form of the grotesque and that other means are old-fashioned is at least partly prejudiced and irrational. In this respect it is similar to another prejudice operating among the artists that only non-figurative painting is capable of the faithful rendering of the atmosphere of the present moment, of accounting for the tragic quality of human destiny, the social changes, the development of science and technology and that only such painting is truly modern. Non-figurative painting, no one would doubt, is indeed modern and does render the tone and the character of our epoch yet it has no monopoly to do so, and is a good example of how the development and the subsequent popularity of the new means of expression are determined not only by the real need to uncover modern reality and the originality of the artists' visions but to some extent also by the suggestive influence of the views, interpretations, artistic programs, and philosophical currents adhered to and popularized by critics, theorists, gallery owners. In both cases we may speak of a social pressure to be modern, to paint non-figuratively or to be satirical in the manner of the grotesque, for otherwise the artist may find himself on the margin of the artworld as non-original, uninteresting, old-fashioned which for many equals artistic death. Thus modernity becomes a must. The defenders of modernity, by means of the pressure exerted by their views, programmes and theories, create facts which then serve as proofs of the accuracy of their theories and ideas.

The content of the works is an equally important criterion of their modernity which may then be intensified or reduced with the use of the means of expression.

We must admit, however, that such factors as making satire more intellectual, the intensification of its cognitive function at the cost of its moral influence, the absence of direct judgment, the liking for the grotesque, the absurd and other sophisticated means of expression which at the same time make ambiguous the author's views and his emotional attitudes, all these belong indisputably to the most prominent features of modern satire. Yet the question arises here of whether they do not diminish the sharpness of satire, reduce its critical edge and thus strip satire of its most specific qualities? And one is really tempted to answer yes.

It is not easy nowadays to find authors who would be solely interested in satire. It is also rare to have major works such as novels or comedies which could be accepted as typically satirical though the threads, the motifs and the aspects typical of satire do appear in many literary works. This does not apply to literature only, for the situation in the theatre and the cinema is analogous. Only graphics seem to be the exception.

One may, obviously, object to this by saying that these phenomena are not so novel as they seem to be. Never, however, have they been so intense and manifest. It is typical of twentieth century art that it did away with the purity of artistic genres and stylistic conventions having mixed and intermarried them.

Parallel to the problem of the modernity of satire is the question of absurd humour. This type of humour is very popular now and seems to be specific for, and typical of, modern art. Unfortunately, the term "humour" in the expression "absurd humour" is used neither in a unified nor a univocal meaning. It is understood either as a kind of the comical only, or the humourist comical, or the comical as such. Sometimes it becomes a form of humourist writing or even a specific sense of the comical.

The adjective "absurd" suggests accurately that absurd humour makes a form of the comical which uses nonsense and absurdities. The history of com-

edy writing testifies that such an attitude is not typical of all the humourist or satirical works. Thus not every type of the comical is of the absurd kind. Not every perception of the comical goes together with the sense of the absurd. Usually we classify as nonsense what is out of gear with logic or with common sense. In everyday life people usually take as illogical, stupid or absurd all that goes contrary to their ways of thinking, habits and conventions.

Let us now discuss the following questions:

a) What is the relation between the comical and nonsense? Is every kind of absurd comical?

b) What are the specific features of absurd humour?

c) Is this kind of the comical indeed flourishing nowadays and does it really make a phenomenon characteristic of the twentieth century?

d) Is talk about various forms of the absurd comical or its various uses justified?

The comical production has never turned away from the absurd. First, one of the major functions of the work of the comical (satirical works in particular) in various epochs and by various authors has been to unmask nonsense contained in existing relationships and in social institutions, value systems, views, attitudes, habits and fantasies. Think, for example, of Rabelais, Erasmus, Voltaire, Gogol, Shaw. This effect may be achieved by representing the phenomena in their natural environment with every care taken to preserve the outer similarity of the representation to the object represented yet with the emphasis put on exaggeration of the nonsensical features of the object.

An analogous role was played by the fabrication of artistically absurd states of affairs and situations which, while completely non-real and autonomous, nevertheless corresponded to, and went together with, the phenomena existing in reality, taken to be normal and meaningful, helping thus to see them in a new light.

Secondly, some elemental forms of the comical almost always seem absurd. Indeed, almost any joke is to some extent absurd. This is typical of paradoxes which initially always seem absurd. However, they are also seemingly nonsensical because, contrary to our first reaction, they do contain ac-

curate observations or thoughts (Oscar Wilde: "Life is far too important a thing ever to talk about."[77])

Thirdly, the absurdities introduced by the author seemingly for the sake of the reader's entertainment might serve the end of a deeper characteristics of a protagonist, his or her cultural background, mental abilities, knowledge, the sense of life direction, etc.

In all such cases nonsense was not used as a purely autonomous and unmotivated absurd. Absurd did not make an end in itself even when a seeming nonsense expressed a meaningful thought or when superfluously normal and meaningful existing phenomena revealed their absurd character. In both cases the absurd was subdued to either the cognitive or the unmasking function.

We shall not succeed in finding any work of the comical in the history of art which contains an utterly disordered and arbitrary set of unmotivated nonsense. Even if we were justified in calling such a work a work of art, it would not be comical. Nonsensical situations were motivated by the development of the plot, by the logic of the events presented whereas the absurd actions of the protagonists were justified by their intellectual abilities, the state of their consciousness, their acquaintance with the state of affairs or with the intentions of other protagonists (known to the reader), or, finally by their own intentions initially unknown to the reader.

The expression "absurd humour" is not used to define the comical production of the past in general terms and becomes popular only in the twentieth century. Historically speaking, it owes its popularity to the Dada movement, surrealism and the crazy comedies (Marx brothers), so that the expansion of "pure nonsense" in art started properly at the turn of the present century. Classic examples of the comical of the absurd are to be found in Antoni Słonimski's and Julian Tuwim's small ads in the Fools' Day edition of the *Kurier Polski* newspaper:

"I stammer daily 8-12 a.m. and 4-6 p.m. Fridays and Tuesdays for the ladies. 11, Wilcza Street."

"I can teach French, arithmetic and Latin. The most efficient method. But I do not want to. Tel. 0,75."

Some theorists claim that there is no absolute distinction between absurd humour and its conventional forms. The borders between the two are fluid and relative. What differentiates absurd humour from its conventional form is its much broader extension. Since the sense of the absurd changes historically we cannot rule out that what seems absurd today will become assimilated in the course of time, will become common and old-fashioned turning into conventional humour. However, though absurd humour neither makes an absolute novelty nor differs absolutely from other forms of the comical it exhibits its own specific qualities:

a) Its first feature is its intellectual and philosophical character. Instead of getting involved in the problem of social manners it analyses the mechanisms of thinking and tries to verify the ways of conceptualizing reality.

b) Secondly, absurd humour favours the problematic of existence and the motifs of the macabre.

c) It is also characterized by a considerably high level of aggressiveness and violence, even nihilism, towards traditions, conventions and common sense.

d) Finally, absurd humour provokes and attacks the reader's intellectual capacities.

Such characteristics seem accurate, though not all of the enumerated features are of equal importance in particular works representing this form of humour. Undoubtedly, modern absurd humour intentionally plays a game with logic, with common sense and with stereotypical notions, images and behaviour, and the intensity of the occurrence of absurd motifs in a humourist work together with the expansiveness of the comical absurd are evidently on the increase. The comical absurd is not a mere element which only brings variety to the work (absurd jokes, nonsensical behaviour of some protagonists) but becomes a factor constitutive of the main thread or the plot of the work. No longer an addition, interpolation, ornament or by-product, it becomes the fundament of construction yielding its paradoxical logic to all of the plot. Think, for example, of some of the British-made film comedies. *The*

Ladykillers told an incredibly macabre story in the tone of an amusing and innocent anecdote. *Kind Hearts and Coronets* created the impression of comical nonsense by means of a combination of a bloody story of how a member of an aristocratic family had murdered the rest of the family, with a light, amusing and refined manner and the tone of narration appropriate for a cultured conversation. A suave murderer resembled a subtle and sophisticated artist, never forgot good manners and always observed the rules of good conduct. Thus the comedy challenged our stereotypical notions concerning a ruthless, cynical and merciless killer.

The comical of the absurd (an expression more adequate than absurd humour), even though it is not a novel phenomenon does exhibit features of its own and is in a flourishing state. It may find employment in all the major forms of the comical production, i.e., in both purely comical works (e.g., farce) and humorous and satirical works. Thus we may talk of the various uses of the absurd comical. The absurd comical of the farce and the humorous type is more disinterested and pure than its satirical form. Since, however, there is no absolutely pure absurd comical, the borders between various forms of this kind of the comical are blurred and unstable. On the one hand satire which employs the absurd comical is more universal and inquisitive and cognitively attractive, but on the other hand it is less specific, less militant and less univocal and to a lesser degree may illustrate current issues. Its sphere of influence also gets smaller since it demands a more intensive intellectual effort on the part of its readers.

The Comical and Other Aesthetic Qualities (the Beautiful, the Sublime, the Ugly)

We have encountered the problem of the relationship between the comical and other kinds of aesthetic qualities while talking about the complex forms of the comical (the tragic in particular). This is an important question and therefore I shall discuss it in some detail now. Since the mutual relationships between the comical and other aesthetic phenomena depend on the

form of the comical production, the question will be tackled in the part dealing with the major forms of the comical.

The comical and the tragic. The comical and the tragic, together with comedy and tragedy, have been traditionally contrasted with each other in the history of European art and aesthetics. The contrast has its evident partial justification in the fact that the comical and the tragic differ as to the experiences they evoke. The experiences produced during the perception of the tragic are most often of a sad and gloomy character (dread, horror, compassion, at times the feeling of inferiority towards the tragic heroes, etc.) and frequently produce tears. The comical, on the contrary, produces joyful and optimistic experiences (a cognitive satisfaction, the feeling of superiority, the sense of compensation for powerlessness and helplessness towards an enemy evoked by his fall, a satisfaction at having the adequacy of our norms confirmed by ridiculing the phenomena deviating from them) which in turn evokes smile and laughter. It seems, however, that the differences between the experiences produced during the perception of the comical and the tragic, respectively, do not provide a sufficient explanation for them and do not justify why the opposition between them and between the kinds of art having to do with them has been so canonized and petrified in the practice and in the theory of European art reaching its peak in classicism. The most likely reason for such an account of the relationship between the comical and the tragic was the nature of ancient Greek comedy and tragedy. Comedy is by no means the only kind of art where the comical manifests itself, but obviously the comical is its dominant aesthetic quality in the same way as the tragic dominates in tragedy. (The terms "tragic" and "comical" derive from "tragedy" and "comedy".) No wonder, then, that the character of ancient comedy and tragedy and their relationship influenced both the subsequent development of art and of its theory.

Ancient tragedy and comedy were indeed not only different from each other but stood in opposition to each other as well. Their opposition manifested itself in the differences of the social background and the position of the protagonists, in the differences of the language they talked, of the

actors's masks, even of the problems raised by both kinds of art (the latter difference appeared to be historically most durable).

The protagonists of tragedy were great, prominent and mighty. They were heroes, kings or the members of royal families. In comedies the protagonists either were of plebeian origin or were slaves. The members of the social elite appeared in comedy only when the author made them the object of his attack. The language of tragedy was uncommon, lofty, pathetic, whereas comedy made use of everyday, often obscene and vulgar, speech. The same applies to gestures, the scenic movement and the style of performance. Even the masks used in performances were of a completely different character.

Tragedies concentrated on the problems of life, death and regeneration, guilt and punishment, human destiny and man's relationship to gods and to the order of things. All that was extraordinary in character and almost metaphysical in dimensions. Even the wrongs of the tragic heroes had an aura of greatness and deserved direct divine intervention. Comedies, on the contrary, initially contained a variety of orgiastic and phallic motifs and focussed their attention on everyday life of the family and the community, on its social and political aspects. Yet they did not get beyond the phenomena of everyday life and did not lift them up to the pedestal of greatness. Sufferings of the tragic heroes evoked dread, compassion and sympathy; sufferings of the comical heroes had a completely different character (most often they were caused by physical pain when the protagonist was beaten, suffered material loss or misfortunes caused by his stupidity, bad inclinations, wrong views, etc.) and did not deserve compassion. Antiquity had never produced tragicomedy and it was only around the beginning of the seventeenth century that Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Shakespeare established a new pattern. Shakespeare's and Lope de Vega's plays marry elements of the tragic with the comical. Elements of the comical may be found even in *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Richard III*. *Troilus and Cressida* is a tragicomedy similar in many respects to twentieth century tragicomedies. Lope de Vega's work contains even more tragicomical elements. He surpasses Shakespeare in breaking the canons of ancient tragedy not only by marrying the tragic with the comical but also by making

the representatives of the plebeian into tragic heroes. Yet the greatest success in overcoming the absolute distinctions between the tragic and the comical was achieved by Cervantes whose Don Quixote has become one of the most celebrated tragicomical figures in all art.

The second part of the seventeenth century was marked by the triumph of classicism which again set absolute borders between tragedy and comedy and became a period of pure tragedies (Corneille and Racine) and pure comedies (Moliere). Tragicomical features may be detected only in Alcest, the protagonist of *Misanthrope*. The eighteenth century brought no changes in this respect though some tragicomical motifs may be found in Carlo Gozzi (*Love for the Three Oranges*) and W. A. Mozart (*Don Giovanni*). It was only in the next century that such authors as Gogol, Alfred de Musset, Goya, Słowacki, Czechov, Daumier, Dostoevski, Zapolska, changed the situation radically. The twentieth century has gone even further in marrying the tragic and the comical, particularly in drama. Pure tragedies have become rare. The problems traditionally reserved for tragedy (the meaning of life, the questions of moral responsibility, guilt and punishment) have been taken up by tragicomedies and grotesque tragic comedies (Dürrenmatt, Ionesco), a practice which has been justified in theory as well. In 1929 an American critic and theorist Joseph Wood Krutch claimed that modern man did not think himself fit to become a tragic hero and that this was the reason why there had been no good tragedies since Shakespeare.[78] Other theorists hold similar views. They point to the chaos and irrationality typical of our age and emphasize the absence of great and noble characters without whom tragedy is impossible.[79] Dürrenmatt, for example, does not say that tragic situations are no longer possible but holds that the classic form of tragedy is impossible and that the tragic quality may find its expression only in comedy. Tragedy involves a mistake, penance, punishment, responsibility whereas the modern age is the age where no one is guilty and no one is responsible and yet all are guilty in a way.

Such a view, however, is questionable. The fact that in the twentieth century we cannot produce tragedies similar to the ancient ones does not imply

that tragedy as such is impossible. Consider such works of art as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Andrzejewski's and Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds*, Tarkovski's *The Child of War* or Jean Anouilh's *Euridica*. No one would deny that they are instances of tragedy. The claim that our epoch has no truly great and noble characters is groundless. The element of guilt and punishment is not a necessary feature of every tragedy. Children are definitely not responsible for the destiny of the world, and even adults' responsibility is not the same in every case. However, even if it is accurate to exclude the possibility of tragedy in the twentieth century it is a matter of fact that tragicomedies do appear more frequently than tragedies. The present century has certainly done away with any attempts to keep the comical and the tragic apart, attempts which were artificial and without human justification. Life not only contains both the comical and the tragic but actually does a lot to marry them just as it marries the small with the great, the common with the sublime, the beautiful with the ugly.

In reality the same events, persons and the features of their character may be interpreted differently, depending on the point of view or the manner of their presentation, once being comical, once tragic, once tragicomical. As a dominant feature of character parsimony was presented either as comical (Moliere's Harpagon) or as tragic (Shylock). Jealousy and jealous characters were treated analogously. Some of them are only comical, others are tragicomical whereas Othello reaches the heights of tragedy.

One and the same plot situation may be the starting point for both tragedy and comedy. Deceit and a lie are the starting point for comedy (*Le Marriage de Figaro*), tragicomedy (Zapolska's *Żabusia*) and tragedy (*Othello*). Infidelity or misunderstandings are all good examples here. The same applies also to historical or legendary figures who can be presented in both ways without any substantial modification of the plot. Doctor Faustus, a protagonist in many tragedies, has had his comical impersonations (German folk plays of the seventeenth century, Paul Valery's unfinished *Lust la demoiselle de Cristal*, or Rene Clair's *La beaute du diable*) and so has Don Quixote. There are various ways of putting the tragic and the comical together. They have

many forms and play various roles in different kinds of art, and even in different artworks.

In relation to the type of works which marry the comical and the tragic there are four basic forms of their bond:

1) The link between the tragic and the tragicomical in works of basically comical character.

2) The link between the comical and the tragicomical in works of basically tragic character.

3) The link between the comical and the tragic in tragicomical and comicotragic works for which the inseparable connection between these aesthetic qualities is their constitutive genre feature.

4) The link between the comical and the tragic in works which when looked at globally can be interpreted as neither comical, nor tragic, nor tragicomical.

FORM I. *The tragic and the tragicomical in satire.* Some theorists of the satire see the essence of satire in an inseparable connection of the tragic and the comical. For Evnina, for example, satire is "an objective unity of both extremes: the comical and the tragic. It is comical in form since it makes use of comical effects... Its contents, however, is tragic, for it deals with horrendous, disgusting and inseparable contradictions and conflicts of human society."[80]

In satire the comical and the tragic indeed often come together. Yet we cannot make this link into something absolute and canonical. The tragic does not make an inseparable feature of satire and even though some elements of the tragic do make themselves visible in some satirical works the tragic is not the main content of satire.

What Evnina actually does is to narrow the concept of satire to one of its forms. Her decision goes contrary to her earlier distinction of the two forms of satire: "gloomy and hopeless" (Swift) and "joyful and merry" (Rabelais)[81]. Most frequently the tragic and the tragicomical concern the situations and fate of those who are the victims of the adversaries of the satirist, the features of their characters, their social relations, their views, etc. Chichikov's negotiations to buy the dead souls are very comical, but for their background they have the tragic fate of Russian peasants treated as if they were merchandise.

The tragic background to satire is to be found not only in Gogol, but in other satirists such as Swift, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Goya, Daumier, and others as well. Another technique the satirists make use of to mobilize anger and indignation towards the persecutors is a direct presentation of the victims' fate.

Examples illustrating this technique may be found in works by Gabriela Zapolska (the tragic situation of Hanka in *Madame Dulska's Morality* or the tragicomical figure of the husband in *The Four of Them*). Some of Chaplin's films contain tragicomical elements together with phenomena ridiculed with the help of satirical means (*The Great Dictator*, *Modern Times*, *A Dog's Life*). The tragic and the tragicomical have been interwoven into satirical works by Chekov, Goya, Maupassant, Zola, Thackeray and others.

It is relatively rare to find tragicomical dimension in the figures who are criticized by the satirist (Gogol's Poprishchin in *The Diary of a Madman* or Heinrich Mann's main protagonist in his satirical novel *Professor Unrat*).

The functions which the tragic and the tragicomical may fulfil in satirical works are as follows:

1) When the tragic is used to characterize the fate of the victims of satirical objects it aggravates the spectator's negative attitude to what the satirist attacks and induces his anger and indignation.

2) When the elements of the tragic or the tragicomical are parts of the figure ridiculed by the satirist they make the spectator's attitude more complex and tone down the sharpness of the satirical negation. Rather than evoking indignation and anger the figures of a tragico-satirical character induce contempt, sometimes even aversion, but dyed with compassion.

3) Finally the tragic or the tragicomical may appear in a satirical work with no direct relation to the objects of satire or to their victims. Their role in this case has to do with a fuller representation and characterization of existing reality.

The tragic and the tragicomical in humorous writing. In humorous works the tragic is most commonly only implied and hides behind seemingly pleasant content. This is characteristic of some works by Gogol and Chekov which, though initially seem to be full of colour and humour, eventually evoke sad

reflection and a gloomy mood. The tragicomical is more popular in humorous pieces (think for example of the later Chaplin in *The Gold Rush* or *City Lights*, or of Ilya Erenburg's Leysorek Royshtvanetz). The mixture of the comical and the tragicomical in humorous pieces results from adopting the attitude of realism and relativism and aims at an ample, multifarious and objective presentation of the real. It also enriches the experiences of the viewer or reader and directs his attention towards a philosophical reflection on the meaning of life. When the amount of the experience of the comical is carefully measured out it helps to avoid a surfeit of the comical. Such attitude is typical of the most eminent representatives of Jewish humour from Sholom Aleichem to Woody Allen.

The simple and pure comical and the pure tragicomical obviously exclude each other. Therefore farce and vaudeville reserve no place not only for the tragic but for the tragicomical as well (the tragic and the tragicomical appear only in those instances of farce and vaudeville which tend towards the complex comical of a humorous or satirical nature).

FORM II. If introduced into tragic pieces the comical there plays various roles such as:

a) toning down the tragic character of the plot,

b) strengthening the tragic contents by means of contrast (contrary to a)),

c) making the plot more varied and less tense for the viewers.

In tragedy the comical is displayed by the characters and the situations of secondary importance in relation to the main tragic action. Sometimes the comical in question becomes humorous (gravediggers in *Hamlet*) or satirical (old Karamazov, Goya's tragic pieces, Chekov's short stories).

The comical features of the main protagonists of the basic plot most often take the form of the tragicomical (Richard III, King Lear and Gloucester, Taras Bulba, and others). This does not exclude the possibility that the tragicomical may characterize the secondary characters in works of the tragic (e.g. Marmeladov in Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment* or Nik the fool in Juliusz Słowacki's *Maria Stewart*).

The distinctions drawn do not attempt a full and absolute set of characteristics of the relationship between the comical and the tragic. In practice there are many works which fall in between humorous writing and satire or between comedy and tragicomedy. As a protagonist Don Quixote is indisputably tragicomical, yet it is arguable whether Cervantes's work falls into the category of comedy or of tragicomedy and which of the forms of the comical makes its presence most visible here.

FORM III. Tragicomical and comico-tragic works are dominated by a mixture of the comical and the tragic which determines the climate, the meaning and the special character of a given piece. Obviously there are various ways to give a tragicomical slant to an entire work of art. The easiest method consists in constantly mixing both the comical and the tragic characters, situations and threads. A more sophisticated method consists in a simultaneous presentation of the same events, situations and characters as both comical and tragic. This way of combining the comical and the tragic is typical of, for example, Gogol (*The Coat* and *The Diary of a Madman*) and Chekov (*The Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*). The second part of E. Munk's *Eroica* and Dino Rossi's tragicomedy *Life Is Not Easy* are based on this principle. Lastly, the tragic may find its expression in a grotesque-comical form, a method which has been perfected by modern drama in such various pieces as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Dürrenmatt's *The Visit of an Old Lady*, *Romulus the Great*, *Physicists*, or Ionesco's *Chairs*.

A given work does not automatically become tragicomical simply because there are one or two tragicomical characters in it. A work of art acquires a tragicomical significance only when its main protagonists' destiny or character are tragicomical. This does not imply, however, that every tragicomedy must as a rule have a tragicomical main protagonist. The protagonists in *The Three Sisters*, for example, are not tragicomical. A protagonist becomes truly tragicomical when his tragic destiny has been determined by the comicality of his personality or appearance, his situation and his existential perspectives and the attempts to realize his dreams and ideals. Bulgarian aesthetician Isak

Passy has noted very accurately that if Don Quixote lost his comical features he would no longer be tragic.[82]

FORM IV. The comical and the tragic may obviously coexist and reinforce each other in those works of art which as such are neither comical nor tragicomical (Tolstoy's *War and Peace*). Such interrelations between the comical and the tragic, however, are least interesting and I shall not go into the details here since it is usually only one among many techniques employed by an artist.

The relationship between the comical and the beautiful and the sublime. As aesthetic phenomena the beautiful and the sublime are often opposed to the comical. Jean Paul, for example, claimed that it is neither the tragic, nor dignity nor the sentimental but the sublime which is the opposite to the comical. Contrary to the tragic, dignity and the sentimental which coexist along with the comical in tragicomedies and the sentimental comedies (Shakespeare, Lessing and Stern) the comical and the sublime never go together.[83]

Creating an opposition between the beautiful and the sublime, on the one hand, and the comical, on the other, is quite understandable in those theories which try to locate the essence of the comical in the degradation of real or apparent values, in particular in the degradation of the manifestations of greatness which is an attribute of the sublime. Objectively the comical is opposed to the beautiful by these theorists who take ugliness to be an attribute of the comical phenomena.

I have tried to prove that not all of the forms of the comical have to do with negative phenomena and that the comical does not necessarily have to discredit its objects. Some forms of the comical which express approval and sympathy may go together with the beautiful and the sublime.

The figure of Don Quixote, for example, contains actually a mixture of the comical, the tragic and the sublime. The same applies to many impersonations by Chaplin or to the main protagonist (by Vittorio de Sica) in Roberto Rossellini's *Il Generale della Rovere*. Elements of the comical may also go together with elements of the sublime and the spiritual beautiful (Lenin in Romm's films on the Russian revolution). If the comical may appear together

with the beautiful and the sublime in one and the same figure then the more so in one and the same work. The beautiful and the sublime are most often associated with the humorous comical, yet they can be suffused with satirical elements as well. This does not exclude the possibility of the coexistence of both beautiful and sublime figures and satirical ones. Such a coexistence is particularly possible in these works in which the phenomena ridiculed by the satirist are juxtaposed with phenomena of highest aesthetic merit. Thus in his satirical drama-fables a Soviet playwright Shvartz directly juxtaposes satirical figures and characters which are beautiful and sublime. Elements of the beautiful may as well find their expression in the very ideal which is the criterion for the evil contested by the satirist.

It is a matter of principle that the sublime never occurs in farce and vaudeville. This does not apply to the beautiful which, however, is manifested by those characters which do not embody the primitive comical and at times are marginal to the comical plot.

The comical and the ugly. The comical and the ugly have often been brought together, since, indeed, the ugly quite often produces experiences of the comical. Yet not all that is comical goes together with the ugly in the same way as not every form of the ugly is comical. Finally, it is not a matter of popular reception that the ugly would be seen as comical. Chernyshevsky rightly observed that the ugly becomes comical when it pretends to be beautiful. Yet it seems that this is not the only case when the ugly may evoke the experience of the comical. One may suppose that the most important determination in this respect concerns whether the ugly has to do with real life phenomena or whether it has to do with the phenomena presented in art.

Apart from the case observed by Chernyshevsky, the ugliness of someone's face or his appearance rarely evokes the experiences of the comical with people of culture and sophistication. Such experiences are blocked or very much weakened by strong feelings of compassion or repulsion. Ugliness of apparel or an interior resulting from the lack of good taste (sometimes it is simply a matter of difference in tastes) does not evoke compassion and therefore makes an easier target for the comical, while spiritual ugliness is more

prone to evoke such emotions as indignation, anger, contempt, repulsion, at times even compassion, which may also block or impede the comical reaction to the ugly.

In the case of art things stand differently. Here the ugliness of the physique (e.g. as revealed in caricature) and the spiritual ugliness when appropriately presented may both produce strong experiences of the comical. Hence the ugly is one of the aesthetic phenomena which to a considerable degree can go together with all the major forms of the comical, including the "elemental" and "pure" comical of farce and vaudeville.

In general terms, it seems that the interrelations between the comical and other kinds of aesthetic phenomena are multifarious and complex. One should neither negate the specificity and individuality of particular aesthetic phenomena nor oppose them against each other in an absolute manner since in some respects they contrast with each other while in some respects they come together. When classifying the forms of the comical we must account not only for the specific features of particular types of the comical but for the specificity of their relationships with other kinds of aesthetic qualities as well. To a large degree the complex forms of the comical have something to do with all the aesthetic phenomena mentioned here. The primitive comical, on the other hand, relates only with the ugly.

The Comical in Various Forms of Art

It is obviously true that such forms of art as works of literature, theatre performances, films and paintings may and do produce diverse and intensive experiences of the comical. It is much less obvious and clear, however, how to account for the comical in sculpture, music and architecture. In sculpture the occurrences of the comical are rather rare, yet it is relatively easy to find relevant examples. There even exists a separate form of sculptural caricature which has been practiced by prominent artists. Jean-Pierre Danton produced high-quality statuettes which caricatured his prominent contemporaries (Honore de Balzac, Ferenz Liszt, Niccolo Paganini, Gioacchino Antonio Rossini, Rothschild, Johann Strauss and many others).[84] Some elements of

the comical may be found even in the sculpture and bas-reliefs in Medieval churches and palaces.[85] In the case of the comical in music, opinion is clearly divided. Some theorists, for example Hugo Rieman[86], Robert Zimmerman[87] and Arthur Schopenhauer[88], are against admitting the concept of the comical into music. Others such as Borev[89], Gustav Theodor Fechner[90], Zofia Lissa[91], Johann Volkelt[92] and Fred Fisher[93] say the opposite. The most convincing analysis of the possibilities of musical expression of the comical with ample illustrative material and a penetrating characterisation of the specifically musical comical are to be found in Lissa's paper. What follows owes much to this source.

Vocal music including not only the operettas and musical film comedies but songs and operas (e.g. Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Die Zauberflote*, Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* or Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or*) as well is capable of producing comical experiences. These examples, however, do not suffice to prove the existence of a specifically musical comical since the comical present in these work may be of an extra-musical origin (the comical of the text or of a situation). Musical elements, however, often do exert direct influence on the appearance of the comical or at least on its intensity. The melody and rhythm may strengthen the comical character of such extra-musical phenomena as, for example, movement (think of the manner of walking of the drunken gardener in *Le nozze di Figaro*). Together with the extra-musical phenomena the musical factors may also create such structures which directly evoke the experience of the comical (the discrepancy between a joyful and trivial text and serious and pathetic music).

The cases mentioned do not as yet testify to the existence of an autonomous kind of the musical comical. To prove its existence one would have to draw examples from instrumental music. And indeed there are such cases, but as a matter of fact they occur rarely, are short-termed and usually do not evoke intensive experiences of the comical.

The basis for the specifically musical comical lies in the discrepancy between our musical sets, habits and expectations and the music we are currently presented with. Since instrumental music is asemantic, our musical sets

concern only its form and are not so sharply and absolutely defined as our attitudes to natural objects. Hence the discrepancy between musical habits and musical phenomena does not become so strong as in the case of the semantic arts and is therefore more relative and subjective.

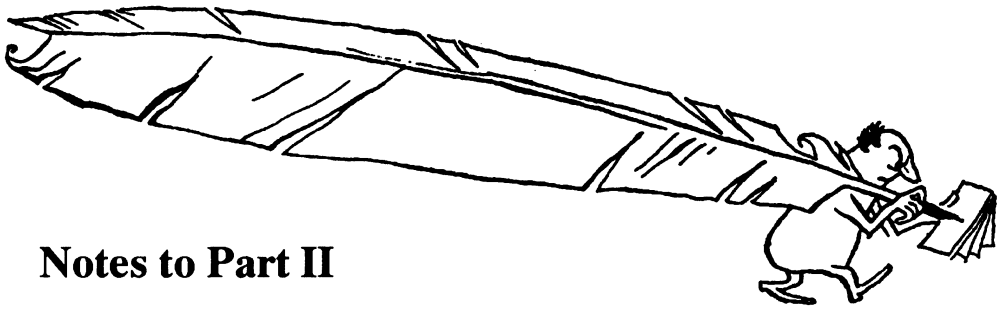
Experiences of the comical may result from the discrepancy between the type of tone-colouring of an instrument and its normal, habitually accepted role in an orchestra and its extraordinary role in a given piece. This happens when, for example, instruments of a lower register such as a double-bass or a bassoon perform fast changes of tone or when the percussion takes on leading the melody. Such phenomena are to be found in Beethoven's ballet *Prometheus* and in Maurice Ravel's orchestral suite. Unusual juxtapositions of tones (e.g. of a small flute and a double-bass) which go against musical habits may also be perceived as comical. The comical in Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* is to a large degree produced by means of such an effect. Comical effects may also appear when we are listening to Chinese or Japanese music which employ contrasts of tones exotic for an European ear.

Comical effects may also result from the use of unusual instruments. In Joseph Haydn's *Children's Symphony*, for example, some musical functions are performed by children's toys (whistles, a cuckoo, etc.).

Finally, experiences of the comical may be produced by styling real-life sounds and introducing them into the structure of a musical work. There are infinite possibilities here. Stravinsky in *Petrouchka* imitated a barrel-organ; Richard Strauss used the bleating of sheep (*Don Quixote*), Felix Mendelsohn-Bartholdy imitated the braying of an ass (*Midsummer Night's Dream*). Similar effects may be found in Camille Saint-Saens's *Le Carnaval des Animaux*. The means of musical expression were also employed to render the comical character of the movement of some animals (the movement of nestlings in Modest Moussorgsky's *Pictures from an Exhibition*) or excessively courteous movements of people (Sergey Prokofyev's *Gavotte*).

Architecture is perhaps the only kind of art which is not meant to produce comical effects.[94] This does not imply, however, that architectural works cannot evoke experiences of the comical. The history of architecture provides us

with examples of buildings designed to make people laugh. There were cases when a building had a shape of a coffee-grinder or a barrel-organ. These cases, however, are indeed unique and isolated. It simply costs too much to construct architectural absurdities merely for the sake of producing comical effects. Much more numerous in the history of architecture are the cases where comical effects were produced unintentionally. Yet these, obviously, disqualify a given work as a work of architecture. The comical produced by means of purely architectural devices most often testifies to the absence of good taste and artistic abilities in the architects or the investors of such buildings. However, even though architecture as such provides us with the experience of the comical in exceptional cases only, its sculptural and pictorial ornament may achieve considerable effects in this respect.



Notes to Part II

1. M. Collins-Swabey, *Comic Laughter. A Philosophical Essay* (New Haven and London), 1961, p. 4.
2. A. Natev, *Isskustvo i obschestvo*, (Moscow, 1966).
3. Hector Monro, *Arguments of Laughter* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1963), p. 40.
4. M. Kagan, *Lekcii po marxistsko-leninskoy estetike* (Leningrad, 1963).
5. J. Feibleman, *In Praise of Comedy* (New York, 1939).
6. C. Chaplin, "Mój sekret", *Film na świecie*, 1956, nr 2, s. 8. [The translator was unable to locate the English original.]
7. *Dialog*, 5(1962).
8. A. Sandauer, *Poeci trzech pokoleń* (Warsaw, 1962), pp. 152-153.
9. A. Sandauer, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
10. K. Groos, *Einleitung in die Aesthetik* (Gissen, 1892).
11. J. Kwiatkowski, "Ad Absurdum", *Twórczość*, 12(1960), p. 126.
12. J. Bystroń, *Komizm* (Wrocław, 1960), pp. 348-435.
13. D. Buttler, "O dowcipie słowotwórczym," *Poradnik Językowy*, 1961, No. 6 and 7.
14. Cf. J. Trzynadlowski, the review of J. Elsberg's *Nekotorye voprosy teorii satiry*, in *Zagadnienia rodzajów literackich*, Vol. 3, 1/4, p. 130.
15. Cf. D. Worcester, *The Art of Satire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. 37.
16. J. Sutherland, *English Satire* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 21.
17. Cf. W. Kirpotin, *Filosovskoye i esteticheskoye vzglyady Saltykova-Shchedrina* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 50-58.
18. Cf. N. Chernyshevsky, *Vozvyshennoye i komicheskoye*, in *Estetika* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 304-307.
19. Collins-Swabey never employs terms like "simple comical" or "pure comical" but speaks about "the comical in the narrow sense" which she takes to be a form of the comical in the broad meaning (equivalent to the ludicrous) along with humour, satire, irony, wit, etc. Cf. M. Collins-Swabey, *op. cit.*, p. 5. The concept of the comical in the narrow sense has been also employed by E. Souriau (*Les categories estetiques* (Paris 1956), p. 43).
20. M. Collins-Swabey, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, 32.
21. Cf. E. Evnina, *Rabelais* (Warsaw, 1951), pp. 276, 245, 265.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 289. Another Soviet theorist D. Nikolayev distinguishes two basic forms of the comical: *the elemental comical* (of appearance, situations, movement, arrangement) and *the social comical*. Cf. D. Nikolayev, *Smyech - oruzhe satiry* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 21-22.
24. Another author who distinguished between the pure comical and satire, irony and humour was G. Meredith. His conception, however, is completely different from the theories discussed so far. For him it is the comical as the expression of the Comic Spirit which is incomparably more reflexive, subtle, useful and effective than such forms of the funny as satire, irony and humour. Cf. G. Meredith, *An Essay on Comedy and Uses of the Comic Spirit* (New York, 1956), pp. 134-141.
25. H. Bergson, "Laughter," in W. Sypher (ed.), *Comedy*, (New York, 1956), p. 148. Even though for Bergson the notions of "the comical" and "laughter" are strictly connected, he never went on to explain the nature of their relationship. To some extent one might suspect that he was not aware that laughter did not always express the comical.
26. Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. by S.H. Butcher (New York, 1963).
27. Hobbes, *Human Nature*, IX, 13 in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. by W. Molesworth (London: 1840), 4, 46.
28. A. Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (London, 1865), p. 248.
29. W. Witwicki, *Psychologia*, Vol. 2 (Lvov, 1925), p. 194.
30. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, transl. by James Strachey (New York, 1960), p. 103.
31. T. Peiper, *Komizm ekranowy*, in *Tędy* (Warsaw, 1950), pp. 294-295.
32. Cf. Borev, *O komicheskom* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 67-69.
33. H. Hoffding, *Psychologia* (Warsaw, 1911), p. 453.
34. S. L. Rubinstein, *Podstawy psychologii ogólnej* (Warsaw, 1962), p. 650.
35. E. Aubouin, *Le genres du risible* (Marseille, 1948), p. 113.
36. Together with the comical which "makes fun of" an object, M. Eastman distinguishes the comical which "merely makes fun" and which evokes the feeling of sympathy and admiration. Cf. M. Eastman, *Enjoyment of Laughter* (Rochester, 1937), p. 266.
37. V. Belinski, *W odpowiedzi Moskwitianinowi*, in *Zbiór artykułów* (Warsaw, 1953), p. 237.
38. J. Kleiner, *Z zagadnień komizmu*, in *Studia z zakresu teorii literatury* (Lublin, 1956), p. 114.
39. M. Collins-Swabey reserves the term "humour" for one of the forms of the comical but admits that she herself employs the term "humourist" interchangeably with such terms as "comedian" or "jester" to signify the creator of the comical (*op. cit.*, p. 5). The word "humour" has been understood in such a broad meaning by T. Lipps, J. Kleiner and S. Potter (see their classifications of the forms of the comical). Cf. T. Lipps, *Komik und Humor* (Hamburg and Leipzig, 1898), pp. 245-247; J. Kleiner, *op. cit.*, p. 114; S. Potter, *Sense of Humour* (London, 1954).
40. J. Kleiner defines "humour" as "a tendency to react with smile and laughter to the facts of life and the resulting tendency towards searching for, and creating, the stimuli for laughter," *op. cit.*, p. 113. Trzynadlowski's opinion is similar: "Humour is our subjective

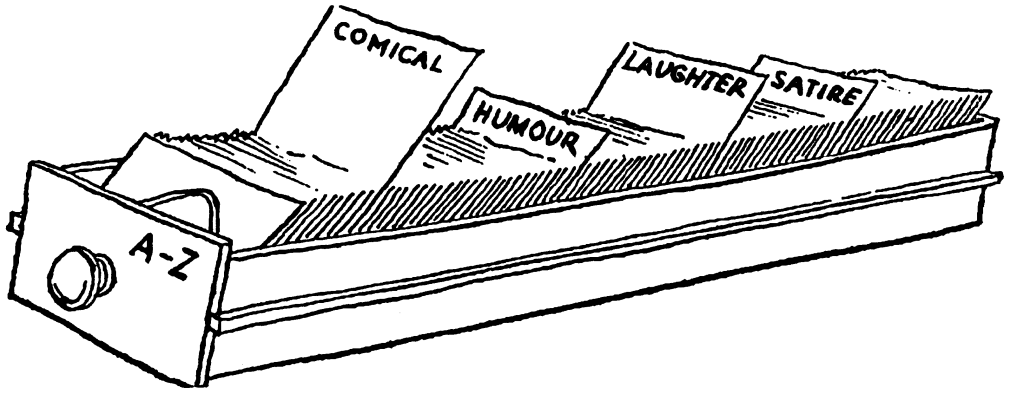
way of experiencing comical phenomena." Cf. J. Trzynadlowski, *Komizm*, in *Studia literackie* (Wrocław, 1955), p. 91.

41. Cf. e.g. Borev, *op. cit.*, p. 120; S. Morawski, *Paradoksy filozofii komizmu*, the preface to Henri Bergson, *Śmiech. Esej o komizmie* (Cracow, 1977), pp. 34-35.
42. This kind of the comical is to be found in the works by Goldoni, Sardou, Labiche, Scribe, some comedies by Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Moliere, Fredro, the films by Max Sennet, Buster Keaton, some forms of variety and cabaret and in circus clown performances.
43. Cf. L. Stolovich, *Esteticheskoye v deystvitelnosti i iskusstvye* (Moscow, 1959), p. 96.
44. Cf.A. Lunacharsky, *Osnovy positivnoy estetiki* (Petrograd, 1923), p. 101.
45. Cf. B. Minchin, *Deyaki pitanya tieori komichnoho* (Kiev, 1959), pp. 169-171.
46. *Op. cit.*, p. 34.
47. J. Müller, *Das Wesen des Humors* (München, 1896), p. 34.
48. *Op. cit.*, p. 43.
49. M. Collins-Swabey, *Op. cit.*, p. 3.
50. T. Lipps, *Grundlegung der Aesthetik*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig and Hamburg, 1914), p. 589.
51. *Op. cit.*, pp. 304-307; a similar distinction has been proposed by Rubinstein.
52. *Op. cit.*, p. 265.
53. J. Kalina, *Bojove poslanie humoru a satiry* (Bratislava, 1953). A similar position has been taken by F. Kratky who claims that irony and satire are the means of humour (*Hodnota a skutecnost humoru* (Prague, 1947), p. 43).
54. *Op. cit.*, p. 133.
55. A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1859), p. 109.
56. Collins-Swabey, Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 59-60.
57. N. Knox, *The Word Irony and Its Context 1500-1755* (Durham, 1961), pp. 9, 13, 45-78.
58. Borev, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-161.
59. K. Wyka, *Tragiczność, drwina i realizm*, in *Pogranicze powieści* (Cracow, 1948), p. 32. Also K. Puzyna speaks of derision as a stance different from both humour and satire. What differentiates derision from humour which is contemplative and indulgent, is aggressiveness. At the same time, when compared with aggressive satire, derision is marked by the absence of positive ideals which are a criterion for satirical attacks. Cf. K. Puzyna, *To, co teatralne* (Warsaw, 1960), p. 150.
60. Such an idea is popular among many Soviet authors. Cf. e.g. V. Kirpotin, *op. cit.*, p. 479; J. Elsberg, *Voprosy teorii satiry* (Moscow), 1957, p. 9.
61. Cf. G. Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton, New York, 1962), pp. 235-238.
62. Cf. Evnina, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
63. Cf. Chernyshevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 306-307.
64. Cf. e.g. M. Carriere, *Aesthetik*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1885), p. 231.
65. Cf. e.g. Borev, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
66. S. Szuman, *O dowcipie i humorze* (Lvov, 1938), pp. 3-4.
67. Hoffding, *op. cit.*, p. 454.
68. Szuman, *op. cit.*, p. 5, 7.

69. Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 649.
70. Aubouin, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
71. Carriere, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
72. K. Wyka, *op. cit.* Good nature and leniency are features ascribed to the humorous stance most often and by most of the authors, among them Lazarus (*Das Leben der Seele*, Vol. 1 (Berlin, 1883), pp. 262-263) who claims that humour is neither a form nor a kind of the comical but a specific mood, a manner of thinking and of viewing the world (pp. 231, 254).
73. Evnina, *op. cit.*, p. 271.
74. Sretensky, *Istoricheskoye vvyedenye v poetiku komicheskovo* (Rostov-on-the-Don, 1926), p. 44.
75. O. Sus, *Metamorfozy smichu a vzteku* (Brno, 1963), pp. 88-90.
76. E. Wysińska, "O współczesności w komedii," *Dialog*, 7(1960), pp. 72, 76.
77. Herbert V. Prochnow and Herbert V. Prochnow, Jr., *A Dictionary of Wit, Wisdom, and Satire* (New York, 1964), p. 160.
78. J.W. Krutch, *The Tragic Fallacy*, in M. Weitz (ed.), *Problems in Aesthetics* (New York, 1959), pp. 594-607.
79. Cf., for example, W. Sypher, *The Meanings of Comedy*, in W. Sypher (ed.), *Comedy*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
80. Evnina, *op. cit.*, p. 282.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 287.
82. Cf. I. Passy *Tragichnoto* (Sofia, 1963), p. 71.
83. Cf. *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, Par. 26, in Jean Paul, *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. 18 (Berlin, 1841), pp. 116-117.
84. Cf.J. Seligman, *Figures of Fun: Caricature Statuettes of Jean-Pierre Danton* (London, 1957).
85. Cf. Irena Janicka, *The Comical Elements in the English Mystery Plays Against the Cultural Background (Particularly Art)*, (Poznań, 1962).
86. H. Rieman, *Die Elemente der musikalischen Aesthetik* (Berlin, 1903), p. 60.
87. R. Zimmerman, *Allgemeine Aesthetik als Formwissenschaft* (Wien, 1865), p. 413.
88. Cf. A. Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
89. Cf. Y. Borev, *O komicheskom* (Moscow, 1957), p. 68.
90. G. T. Fechner, *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, 1925, p. 231.
91. Z. Lissa, "O komizmie muzycznym," *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, 1938, vol. 15, pp. 23-73 and 95-107.
92. J. Volkelt, *System der Aesthetik* (München, 1910), p.349.
93. F. Fisher, "Musical Humor: A Future as Well as a Past?", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 32, No 3 (Spring 1974), pp. 375-383.
94. Borev (*op. cit.*, pp. 68-69) and Zimmerman (*op. cit.*, p. 413) hold a similar opinion.

Part III

Social Significance of the Comical



In Part III I shall defend my basic belief in the social significance of the comical which is based on my own observations and reflections and makes one of the reasons why I chose the comical as the subject of my research.

The material which may be of some use for the attempts to prove that the comical is socially significant is both varied and heterogeneous and ranges from folk wisdom and proverbs to the theories of both the philosophers and the makers of the comical to the empirical observations of ethnologists, anthropologists and psychologists, including factual material registered by the historians of art, manners and politics. The data relevant to our considerations may also be found in works which altogether have nothing to do with either the theory of the comical or general aesthetics. Hence my intensive search for appropriate materials had initially no assurance of success.

Since many theorists of the comical emphasize the social significance of the comical, their works supply at least a portion of the material required. The majority, however, either deal with chosen aspects of the social role of the comical only or restrict themselves to the discussion of the social significance of some of the forms and kinds of the comical and its creation. The reason for such one-sidedness is either the nature and the subject of a discipline (the theory of literature, psychology, psychoanalysis, ethnology, etc.) or a philosophical position, or even the social and political options of a given author.

Thus Marxist theorists talk mainly about the educational and cognitive functions of the comical and concentrate their attention on militant satire neglecting the role of humorous writing, farce and other purely entertaining genres. Among them only Lunacharsky, Morawski, Akimov and Vygotsky take note of the compensatory, entertaining and therapeutic merits of the comical. The problem has been systematically discussed by those theorists who either represent the psychoanalytical theory of art such as Edmund Bergler (*Laughter and the Sense of Humour*), Eric Bentley, Wylie Sypher and, of course, Sigmund Freud, or are not free of the psychoanalytical slant such as J. C. Gregory (*The Nature of Laughter*), Leonard Feinberg (*The Satirist: His Temperament, Motivation, and Influence*) and R. C. Elliott. All of them stress a tremendous role the various forms of the comical production play in keeping the mental health of a given society and talk about ways of an effectively applying the comical as a means of easing tensions and liberating from inhibitions and restrictions. What they do omit almost entirely, however, is the cognitive function of the comical.

While the Soviet aestheticians are fond of satire and compliment it on its social merits, authors from the West often discredit satire and reject its aesthetic and cognitive values, glorifying instead in the humorous production of a tender sort as well as purely entertaining kinds of the comical such as "crazy comedies".

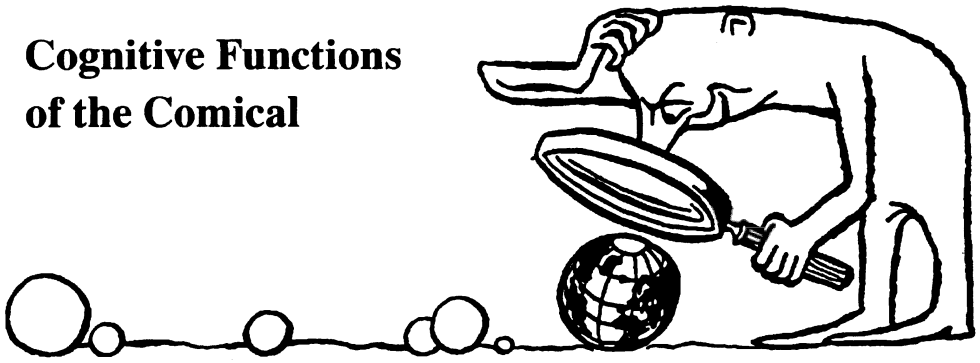
The social meaning of the comical has been most adequately and completely discussed by R. C. Elliott in his *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art*. But even Elliott does not take into account all of the essential aspects of the comical. His scope of interest is restricted only to satire (however broadly understood) and the extra-artistic forms of ridicule corresponding to satire. Secondly, he says nothing about the cognitive functions of the comical.

I am well aware that for an accurate presentation of the question of the social values of the comical another book would be in order and therefore my ambitions do not reach beyond sketching the problem. Sketchy as it is going to be, my presentation shall nonetheless try to account for all the major so-

cially important functions of the comical and discuss all the hitherto distinguished forms of the comical together with their artistic exemplifications.

The role of the satirical comical in social life is similar to that of derision and related forms of ridicule. Sarcasm, derision, etc. represent those forms of ridicule which go beyond the comical in the strict sense of the term. Mockery and irony, on the other hand, are border phenomena and are very frequently capable of evoking the experiences of the comical, although they often cross the border of the comical as an aesthetic phenomenon. In practical terms drawing a strict line between the comical and the extra-comical forms of ridicule is very difficult. Hence it seems that one cannot talk about the social significance of the comical while keeping silent on other socially operative forms of ridicule.

Cognitive Functions of the Comical



A great Russian critic Belinsky remarked once that laughter makes an excellent tool for distinguishing between what is right and what is wrong.[1] Indeed, the cognitive capacities of the comical seem to be unquestionable. Many theorists of the comical see the essence of the delight evoked by the experience of the comical in the satisfaction coming from cognition. E. Kucharski states that "comical laughter expresses the satisfaction with our cognitive powers."[2] This view in particular characterizes those theories which take the solution of an unexpected short-term puzzle to be an essential moment in the experience of the comical (Lipps, Lunacharsky[3], Borev[4]). For Szuman "there is no laughter without astonishment, and there is no astonishment outside the realm of knowledge. Astonishment and ensuing laughter result from having a sudden idea, or from thinking something in a novel way, noticing something new or seeing a familiar object in a new light, spotting an unknown similarity and enjoying a sudden association of the elements of reality which have never been thus associated in thought and imagination."[5] Boy-Żeleński held interesting views concerning the cognitive function of the comical. He claimed that laughter is a very specific act of knowledge: "It is a perception of the world which is very far from our common way of thinking, and perhaps more akin to the child's perception which as a whole is a reflex action." He says that "when we experience those forms of the comical which express a logical error our laughter states that we have

spotted and understood the error having somehow checked the long chain of reasoning in a short-cutting manner."[6] In this moment we are no longer using our brain but are thinking as it were with our body like a child. Or, we can say our thinking has become *musical*: in order to spot a false note, the musician does not have to calculate the vibrations of the air-waves in the particular sounds.[7]

Boy's considerations contain an important observation that the perception of the comical and the cognitive processes taking place during the moment of perception are of a momentary, instantaneous character.[8] Boy's terminology, however, leaves a lot to be desired. An act of becoming aware of a thing cannot occur without the necessary mediation of an intellect. His terminological difficulties result mainly from his unsuccessful attempt to work out a general definition of laughter which would include both the laughter expressing the vitality and well-being of a child and an adult and the comical laughter. Boy seems to ignore the fact that in the comical laughter the elements of reflection are not distributed evenly, and that a baby's laughter contains no reflection whatsoever. Contrary to what he had intended, Boy provided yet another argument for the necessity of drawing a distinction between laughter understood as a physiological phenomenon and its comical form which has cognitive merits.

A Soviet writer K. Chukovski provided a number of examples testifying to "an irresistible inclination in any healthy child of all the epochs and nations to absurdly deform the small but clearly defined world with which it has just acquainted itself."[9] When it is already familiar with the world, a child is inclined to see it "topsy-turvy". That is why children are so fond of absurd poems, limericks and word-plays which disturb the usual order of things, change proportions, transform properties. Children always find these as comical. Chukovski claims, however, that the comical effects are not what they are after. By means of the comical the children come to the knowledge of the world: "The major purpose is here, as in any kind of play, to practice the skills acquired and to verify the new information."[10] "Any deviation from a norm helps to establish the norm with the child." In this way the child tests its

knowledge, its sense of the world orientation and its mental capacities. If its attempts are successful the child feels better, builds up its self-respect and reinforces its sense of the real.[11]

According to the definition accepted in Part I the experience of the comical is a perception of a specific type of phenomena deviating from the norm, i.e., is an experience of a strictly cognitive character.

In its cognitive functions the simple comical (farce and vaudeville) does no more than record particular facts and situations. It relates mainly to external appearances of the phenomena and does not disclose their hidden essences, reasons and causes. Its cognitive capacities are thus equal to the capabilities of acquiring knowledge at the level of the senses. The sensory perception joins forces with an intensive intellectual activity and generalizing reflection only in satire and humorous writing.

The complex comical of a reflective character manifests itself in such short forms as a joke, an aphorism and a paradox. They may either become independent and complete works of the comical or be used as the means of expression in bigger comical works. In the latter role they appear in works of humour and satire, as well as in some more ambitious and sophisticated works of farce and vaudeville. The cognitive efficiency of aphorisms, jokes and paradoxes seems to be exceptionally conspicuous. They make us think and help us define a given problem in a very condensed way which is often deeper than, say, philosophical definitions. A joke almost always makes an unexpected discovery, discloses contradictions between things which seem similar, or similarities between things distant, or unsuspected features in phenomena which are ostensibly very familiar to us.[12] Particular jokes and paradoxes have their own individual ways of fulfilling different cognitive functions.

A classification of the cognitive functions of these forms of the comical would be in place here but it seems almost improbable that their precise typology is attainable since in practice one and the same joke fulfills many functions at one and the same time. We can, however, provide an intentionally schematic account of some of their variants, though I am sure it may be questionable as well.

Aphorisms, jokes and paradoxes may, for example, draw our attention to affairs which so far have gone unnoticed, or may suggestively express truths about life and the people and provide unexpectedly accurate interpretations of the phenomena. They may also make us see familiar phenomena in a new light and help us see properties we did not notice before. This role is often played by paradoxes which correct our one-sided ideas and notions with their paradoxical truths.

Not always, however, do they tell us any new things; sometimes they only contain concise and essential characteristics of a phenomenon we are familiar with and thus do not actually expand our knowledge. In this case their cognitive merit consists not so much in the novelty of their contents but in the expressiveness, the economy, and the communicativeness of the form which expresses the condensed knowledge about its object.

A similar function is fulfilled by witty instructions which generalize common observations and experiences, such as, for example, "If in other people's eyes you are an early bird, you may safely sleep till noon" (Jewish) or "When you profess a new truth, you'd better speak vaguely" (W. Brudziński).

The cognitive value of jokes, aphorisms and epigrams may also consist in their compelling us to use our brains in order to either understand the meaning of an allusive utterance, a metaphor or an understatement or recognize familiar phenomena such as the types of people, life attitudes, situations, etc. which are its subject. The immediate deciphering of the meaning of a joke or finding its actual references give the joke's addressee an intensive cognitive satisfaction.

Traditionally the best cognitive effects have been ascribed to humorous writing which presents the world and people in their actual colours and proportions, neither deforming the phenomena nor intending to reform the real. The attitude of the humorous is contemplative and reflective, meditating on the nature of man and the order of things. He tries to destroy dogmatic and absolutist ideas by means of exposing the relativity of our knowledge and values and showing the values hidden in ostensibly valueless phenomena and the weaknesses of ostensibly absolute ideas and embodiments of virtue. The

humourist helps us become aware of the universality of the contrasts and disproportions of the real.

On the other hand, due to the absence of reflective contemplation and to its militant engagement and a tendency towards deforming its objects, satire has been ascribed no major cognitive merits.

This view, however, seems without firm grounds. The conviction that the truly cognitive attitude involves unengaged contemplation of no practical ends and of no need to realize concretely defined aims is one of the prejudices expressing contempt for practical involvement and the glorification of intellectual isolationism which overlook the fact that it is just to the practical needs of production and consumption, to the practical activity and engagement in social matters that we owe our greatest discoveries in both natural and social sciences. Neither satire's social involvement nor its tendency towards deforming its objects strip it of cognitive merits. Satire does make use of deforming yet this technique (e.g. hyperbole or a change of proportions) serves the end of enhancing what normally goes unnoticed. One of the main tasks of many satirical works is exposing appearances and disclosing the essence of the phenomena. The evil that satire is after hides its nature, trying to present itself in the clothing of virtue. The bureaucrats pretend to be conscientious and ardent officials, soulless formalists pretend to be guardians of the legal order, hypocrites want to be taken as moralists and chauvinists pretend to be patriots. Quite often they themselves believe they are what they want to be taken to be. An excellent example of satirical unmasking is Moliere's *Tartuffe*. The comical deepens our knowledge of the world and of people, teaches us how to distinguish between what is essential and what is external and warns us against voicing hasty opinions based on appearances.

An extraordinary shrewdness of observation was typical of Rabelais who was capable of discerning empty coxcombing and predatory instincts under knightly pride or intellectual poverty under learned formulas of contemporary scientific dogmas. Exposing the absurdities of phenomena commonly accepted as normal and rational makes one of the major motifs in the works

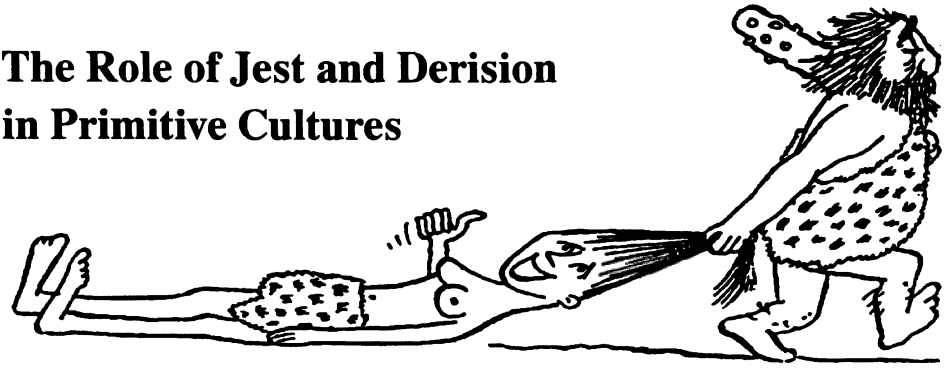
of Shaw and Mrożek and indeed may be generalized into being a feature of the works of the greatest satirists.

One's sense of criticism, the shrewdness of the mind and intelligence in general are boosted by communicating with the works of the comical and with people who are themselves witty. No wonder that in the common opinion wit is a proof of intelligence.

No one can enjoy an active, creative sense of the comical or be truly witty without a keen, brilliant and critical mind. These conditions apply also to the full experience of the comical. The witty, allusive manner of speech or writing with understatements. unexpected associations and epitomes, typical, for example, of Mrożek, leaves a broad margin to be filled up by the reader's intelligence. It compels us to think, unhinges our ideas and representations, illustrates the relativity of our systems of conceptualizing the real, questions stereotyped attitudes, ways of thinking, acting and reacting, and investigates the psyche of a contemporary human being.

Apart from cognitive merits, comedy testifies to the manners of an epoch showing the sufferings, worries and joys of people. The same applies to all other forms of satire and the humorous writing. As examples we may recall Aristophanes whose comedies contain a picture of Athens and of the day-to-day existence of an average Athenian, or Rabelais, whose work is a real encyclopedia of his times presenting a facsimile of the Renaissance manners, intellectual problems, major social institutions and the social structure. Moliere's comedies and La Rochefoucauld's *Reflexions ou Sentences et Maximes Morales* mirror the manners of the seventeenth-century France. The same applies to the eighteenth century whose picture would be incomplete without Chamfort. The manners of the French bourgeoisie in the 1830s were fully and suggestively illustrated by Daumier and Philippon in their satirical cycle *Robert Macaire*. The example of France is by no means exceptional here, for other countries have their own traditions in this respect as well.

The Role of Jest and Derision in Primitive Cultures



There are many ties between primitive man and his community. An exclusion from the group practically equals the death sentence. Faced with the terrifying forces of nature he is too weak and helpless to survive on his own. It is obvious, then, that what the other members of the group say or think about him is much more important for primitive man than for the representatives of civilized societies. Hence public ridicule in which social disapproval finds its outlet means more to him than simple feelings of shame and humiliation. As many anthropologists, ethnologists and ethnographers admit, public ridicule may become a particularly effective means to guarantee individual conformity to the accepted patterns of social behaviour. The fear of ridicule is a major factor in the life of primitive peoples which guards the established order of things with a force stronger than any other positive restrictions.[13] Elliott claims that in primitive cultures (particularly those whose members are exceptionally sensitive to shame) ridicule is the major social weapon menacing those who violate the social order and accepted social habits. Public ridicule and derision tie a member of the community delicately but very strongly to his group without which his existence is simply impossible.[14]

T. Peiper claimed that ridicule in primitive societies was both a defence against degeneration and the condemnation of all socially harmful deviations from the normal.[15]

Let's now see how ridicule and derision worked in primitive societies.

Primitive tribes from Tasmania which represent one of the lowest cultures known to man used derision as a form of social control. One of the forms of punishment was to make the culprit climb up a tree and listen to mockery and derision directed against him by other members of the community.[16]

Bronisław Malinowski quotes a number of facts which testify to the major role of derision, invective and mockery in the life of the tribes of the Triobriand Islands (Melanesia). Public ridicule and derision against marital infidelity, breaking the rules of exogamy or some other moral crime had such a strong effect that it usually led to the culprit's suicide.[17] Derision and contempt were also the powerful sanctions against debauchery and sexual deviations.[18]

Similar observations were made by E. S. Rattray who spent some time with the Ashanti tribe (West Africa). Describing their culture he quotes many data which testify to the Ashanti's extreme sensitivity to invective and ridicule. Acquiring a bad name as a result of public ridicule makes the life of a member of the tribe unbearable.[19] The Ashanti treated suicide in terms of sin. Yet they recognized two cases when such an act was justified: when it saved one from becoming a prisoner of war and when it resulted from a willingness to either avoid or expiate ridicule.

Rattray claims that derision is the most powerful and effective sanction compelling the tribe's members to observe the customs and the rules of the tradition. Even the worst forms of punishment are still less formidable for the Ashanti than this form of social condemnation which deprives a member of the group of both self-respect and the respect of the others.[20]

Rattray describes the Apo ceremony organized by the Ashanti every year. During the ceremony anyone could ridicule and mock anybody else without punishment, including the king and the highest priest. The custom was actually fully accepted by the tribe's authorities. One of their members explained to the author that such an act of freeing oneself from the feelings of hate, jealousy and antipathy which were normally suppressed was very useful socially. Without it "the soul might be ill". As the result of the ceremony the

people cooled down their passions, and felt tender, calmer and more relaxed, whereas the king and the priest, though victims of ridicule, gained political credit since it was easier to govern people who hid no bad intentions and feelings towards their rulers.[21]

Derision is used to control social behaviour by the tribes of Greenland and of both Americas. The Eskimos from Greenland settle their arguments by means of publicly held verbal duels combined with singing, reciting mocking texts and drumming. Their major element is derision, mockery and invective which the participants of such duels direct against each other. A duel may go on for a long time lasting years (naturally with breaks) in exceptional cases. The duel is decided by the members of the tribe who judge the quality of mockery and derision.[22] Elliott observes very accurately that at one and the same time such duels fulfil many socially important functions. For example, they provide long-lasting entertainment and have an important legal function of preventing fights, bloodshed, even murder which often result from having arguments in other communities.

Ridicule plays also an extremely important social role in various Indian tribes. The Tlingit tribe of north-east Alaska use public derision in the form of mocking stories and songs, or publicly displayed grotesque wooden figures against non-criminal offenses and indecent conduct. The Tlingits's exceptional sensitivity to ridicule makes derision and mockery the severest punishment that may lead the culprit to death.[24]

The Indians from the Northern American plains use derision, hissing and laughter against obstinate breakers of customs and of the rules of decency of conduct in order to restore the social order. The same technique is used by them to boost the exceptional courage of their warriors. The candidates for becoming warriors who show cowardice are ridiculed, mocked at and derided by means of improvised mocking songs after other methods such as persuasion, verbal remainders and promises of gifts have failed. The result is usually positive.[24]

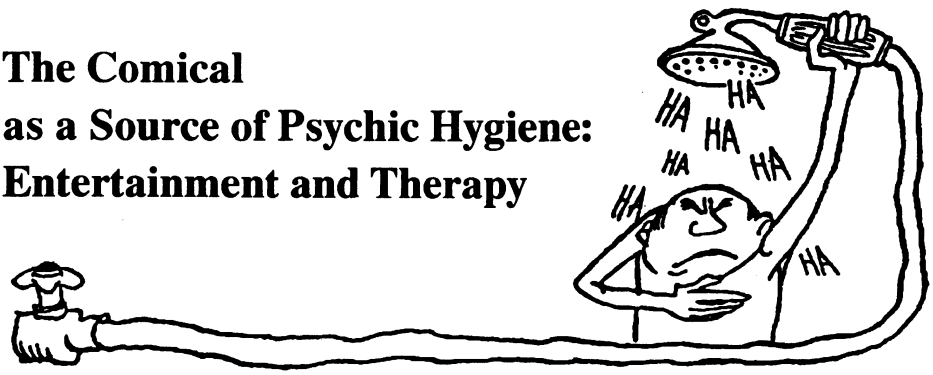
The Pueblo Indians developed a specialized institution of sacred clowns who had penal and policing functions both during important ceremonies and

(partly) in everyday life. Facts which prove that members of other Indian tribes lived in fear of ridicule and were sensitive to derision were observed also by many ethnologists.

The facts I have just related seem to justify at least to some extent the following conclusion: A great role of ridicule and derision in the system of social regulation among primitive peoples seems to be natural and universal. Since such communities have no separate judicial, penal, and educational institutions, in the majority of cases socially important decisions must be taken by public opinion of a group or a tribe. An individual is so much dependent on the community that the voice of the public takes on an exceptional significance for him. The authority of the public opinion uses natural human sensitivity to public ridicule and thus enhances the educational and repressive functions of ridicule and makes it into a powerful means of social control. Derision and mockery become both the sanctions which guarantee that the customs and other social norms are observed and the forms of repression against those individuals who transgress the norms of the social order. Shame produced by public ridicule evokes the intention of repentance, overcoming ridiculed features of the character and gaining the respect of the group.

Apart from that, already in primitive societies the comical performs entertaining and therapeutic functions as well.

The Comical as a Source of Psychic Hygiene: Entertainment and Therapy



We all know that a funny film comedy or a theatre performance, a comic television or radio programme, a humorous novel or simply the company of a witty friend with a good sense of humour may be beneficial for our well-being. As the means of relieving everyday tensions and stress and improving our frame of mind they are undoubtedly very efficient and easily accessible and, more importantly, do not produce painful side-effects such as a hang-over produced by some other means used to achieve a similar effect.

Voltaire said that to soothe man's hardships nature provided him with sleep and hope. Kant very accurately complemented Voltaire's list with laughter. There are comedy genres which exist solely to provide entertainment, evoke laughter and put their audience in a good frame of mind. Hence no assessment of the comedy of entertainment can do justice to its social meaning if this aspect is neglected.

Critics are often unobjective in their treatment of such comedies and (consciously or not) comparing a light and unpretentious piece to a serious drama create an impression that its content is trivial, its protagonists shallow and the absence of any serious problems appalling. Thus they justify their verdict that comedy should be disqualified. A wrong treatment of comedy takes place also when the verdict is positive. Praising a comedy not for the power of its comicality, the display of wit, and inventiveness but solely for the depth of its ideas and moving power of its imagery is an obvious misunderstanding. Not only

the critics but viewers, too, may do injustice to light comedies. Not infrequently some viewers who have enjoyed a nice, careless comedy seem ashamed later that the play did engage their attention and claim that the piece they have just watched was banal or stupid. No one would deny, of course, that compared to the dramas of Shakespeare or Jean-Paul Sartre a comedy of entertainment is poorer in ideas (though a witty comedy may often contain more accurate observations concerning the intricacies of human existence than a serious drama). Yet is it really ideas that matter here? A joyous mood, an optimistic frame of mind is no less important than ideas which are not always fresh and original. One cannot demand from a purely entertaining comedy what is against its nature, in the same way as one cannot criticize tragedy that it is not funny. Comedy satisfies the social thirst for entertainment so characteristic of contemporary societies. Public opinion surveys prove that comedy is the most popular genre among cinema viewers. Comedies account for almost half of the French film production; in West Germany their number reaches 40 percent. Any kind of the comical from the pure comical of vaudeville and farce to the satirical comical may provide entertainment and relaxation. The least entertaining and relaxing among the forms of the comical is the gloomy, angry and venomous satire.

The therapeutic role of the comical, even in its purely farcical or nonsensical versions, however, goes well beyond providing entertainment. During the Great Depression Marx Brothers' comedies, for instance, offered a therapy to frustrated viewers. Yet showing the absurdities of such great institutions as a department store, the opera or the horse racing they did not treat them seriously. On the contrary, in their attempts to entertain the viewer they often crossed the borders of probability as if observing the principle that even if the whole world is falling to pieces one can still go on living and even enjoy oneself.

Mockery, malicious jokes, derision and satire may also be an important factor in maintaining the social mental hygiene be capable of relieving growing dissatisfaction, powerless anger, indignation and various complexes. They may also provide a form of compensation for personal misfortunes and dis-

appointments, humiliation, fear and defeats of a social group or a whole nation.

Aristotle spoke about the cathartic role of tragedy which brings consolation and relief through the discharge of emotions and passions. Yet it seems that catharsis is not solely a property of tragedy and may appear as a result of the experience of the comical as well.[25] This feature of the comical has been emphasized by the theories based on the Freudian approach. Sypher, for example, claims that "After we recognize the misdoings, the blunders, we can liberate ourselves by a confident, wise laughter that brings a catharsis of our discontent."[26] If our laughter at others and at ourselves is indeed sufficiently wise it may thus help us dispose of the sense of guilt, fear, anxiety or terror and see ourselves as better, uncompromising and intrepid.

Freud's followers claim that comedy defends our pleasures against the restrictions of reason and liberates them from the pressure of moral obligations. "Comedy is a momentary and publicly useful resistance to authority and an escape from its pressures; and its mechanism is a free discharge of repressed psychic energy or resentment through laughter."[27] A similar feeling of relief is brought by dreams; yet dreams are purely individual experiences whereas the experience of the comical is infectious and may have a stronger effect when had in the company of other people.

For Freud tendentious jokes are a sublimation of hostile impulses and sexual urges which are socially suppressed. Suppressing a natural need or impulse does not destroy it completely and, since it does not cease to exist in the consciousness, it tends to find its discharge and expression in a different form. After the physical manifestations of hostility have been suppressed they find an expression in verbal invective which later, however, is also accepted as improper and discreditable to civilized people. The latter restriction, says Freud, has borne jokes as an efficient, though not always direct, manifestation of hostility.[28] Freud's theory of the comical is another area where his views are too arbitrary and extreme. One could hardly negate the existence of erotic jokes or jokes which are malicious and hostile. However, not all of the forms of the comical may be interpreted as a sublimation of the libido or of an allegedly

inborn and universal hostility instinct. An individual's hostility is most frequently a reaction against actions which threaten his or her life, interests, prosperity or predilections. Hostility which for some reason has not manifested itself otherwise finds its outlet in a joke. A joke compensates for degradation, fear or helplessness. This fact may be intentionally capitalized on in order to nullify the emotions of hostility, dissatisfaction or indignation. The carnival in ancient Babylon, for example, was used by the ruling classes to enable the people to discharge their dissatisfaction. The oppressed were given full freedom and could ridicule and deride at members of the establishment. Thus laughter helped control the behaviour of the masses. The same logic may be detected in the Roman Saturnalia or in medieval carnivals.[29] Elliott emphasizes a therapeutic function of such customs for the social organism precisely because they make possible a discharge of the hostility impulses.[30] The healing effect of the discharge of hostile impulses is obviously true in individual cases. Socially, however, more appropriate seems to be the interpretation offered by Lunacharsky. He interprets such customs and traditions in terms of a social safety valve which functions in the interest of the ruling classes allowing them to organize and control, in a pleasant atmosphere, the discharge of social dissatisfaction in order to prevent a possible eruption of the masses. It seems that expressing mockery and derision in an atmosphere of general merriment and feast is less unpleasant and dangerous and easier to be taken lightly.

An analogous role in the twentieth century has been fulfilled by political theatres and cabarets. Yet their mostly exclusive character has limited the scope of their influence mainly to the intellectual elites. More widely influential is the role of anonymous political jokes and anecdotes.

K. Irzykowski observed that people use jokes and derision to avenge their failures and to defend themselves.[31] Derision and the aggressive forms of the comical make us feel superior to the object ridiculed and compensate for our own failures. If, then, a person we dislike and for some reason feel envy of and inferior to is being ridiculed, a chance of an active (or at least passive) participation in an act of derision offers a chance of compensating for the real

or imaginary wrongs he or she has inflicted upon us and a source of an intensive satisfaction - obviously of an extra-aesthetic nature.

Any scandal around a hated boss (such as his wife's unfaithfulness) or his physical disproportions such as being fat, stammering, etc., or, to take another example, excellent careers of our former school friends which we think do not result from their talents and hard work make an inexhaustible source of anecdotes, jokes and mockery. Some people compensate for their misfortunes by telling malicious anecdotes about prominent people (thus people say about a famous writer that though his novel is a work of genius he has an unfaithful wife, or they say about a prominent politician that he is bald and therefore inferior to us). On the other hand, the fact that there are anecdotes about a given person may be a proof of his or her social popularity and acceptance since to be a protagonist of an anecdote one has to be either prominent and famous or known to its author(s).

In an economy of shortages of goods malicious jokes about the shortage of meat will not improve its supply but may help to accept its absence in the market if one can laugh scornfully at those who bear responsibility for such a state of affairs. One can even conceive of such a possibility that in self-defence those responsible may themselves produce and distribute such jokes about themselves

Aggressive forms of the comical and derision may be used to avenge and compensate for misfortunes not only by individuals. As a weapon of self-defence laughter is a particularly important for the oppressed, the exploited and the persecuted.

Alongside an official current of comedy in literature and theatre in which the traditional roles of the ridiculed were reserved for the representatives of the lower classes there was a plebeian current which ridiculed the rich and the powerful. There is a whole gallery of protagonists of plebeian humour such as the Italian Pulcinella, the French Fanfan-le-Tulipe, the German Hanswurt, the Russian Petrushka, the Belgian Eulenspiegel, the Slovak Gasparek, the Czech Honza, the Hungarian Ludas Matyi, or the Polish Marcholt. All of them represented progressive tendencies, enjoyed an enormous

sympathy of the plebeian masses and kept winning over policemen, lords, priests and even the devil himself thanks to their wit, an ingenious use of derision, cleverness and intelligence.

The comical has a particular mission to fulfil for those for whom it must at least partly compensate for their military weakness or a humiliating position of an occupied nation, deprived of its rights and perspectives, degraded and persecuted by the invaders. The seriousness of such a role of satire in the fight for freedom is exemplified by the history of Poland during the period of the Nazi occupation. Satire had then become a defender of the national morale, a weapon articulating people's attitudes to the reality of the occupation.[32]

What deserves mentioning here is the role of derision and humorous writing in the life of ethnic, racial and religious minorities. The problem is particularly acute in multinational countries like (in former times) Russia, Austro-Hungary and Great Britain, and (presently) the United States and the Soviet Union. Minorities are aggressively ridiculed using negative ethnic and religious stereotypes. Ridicule is expressed primarily in non-artistic forms such as unsophisticated and often rude jokes and anecdotes such as Jewish jokes in Germany, Russia and Poland, Irish or Scottish jokes in Great Britain, Chukcha and Armenian jokes in the Soviet Union, and Irish, Polish and Italian Jokes in the United States.

On the one hand the jokes express contempt, negligence, even hatred, towards the minority ridiculed. On the other hand their role is to highlight the conviction as to the intellectual, educational, ideological, moral, technological, or even biological superiority of the ethnic majority or of ruling groups. The jokes in question, however, are often so tendentious, primitive and hostile that very rarely do they represent true wit and an artistic quality.

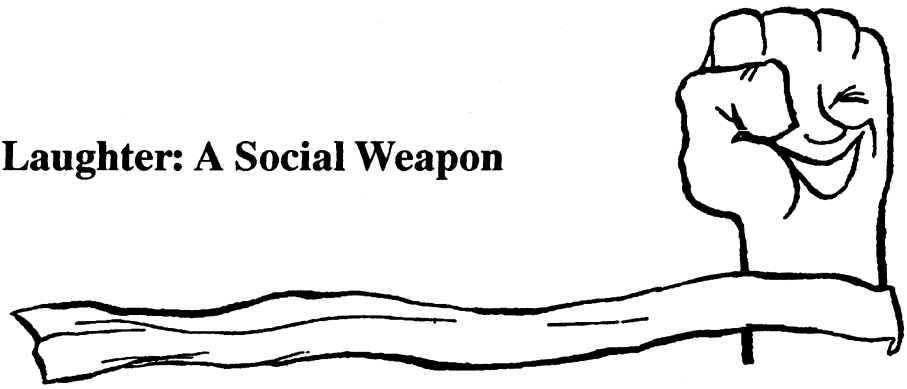
In revenge minorities ridiculed obviously produce similar jokes about the majority. This helps integrate the minority and gives its members the strength or an outer appearance of strength. However, it is much more difficult to make jokes about the stronger. Outside the minority ridicule is effective only when it emphasizes the weaknesses of the ridiculed stronger adversary with wit, accuracy and sophistication.

At times the minorities ridiculed defend themselves by creating their own individual sense of humour which helps them endure social injustice, discrimination and threats as well as their own weakness and helplessness. One can mount a defence against aggressive forms of ridicule turning the situation upside down and joking at his or her own weaknesses, vices and defects, the difference being that such a humorous attitude is mild and sympathetic. This, I suppose, is the source of Jewish and Irish humour in literature, theatre and film.

Non-aggressive jokes may also have a therapeutic significance. Providing entertainment, removing boredom and frustration, these forms of the comical help to overcome embarrassment and find a way out of an embarrassing situation. Self-irony or joking at oneself may also be a form of self-defence. Cyrano de Bergerac is a good example of such a case. Joking at his enormous nose he not only felt intellectually superior over his own physical deficiencies but at the same time anticipated and thus prevented ridicule from others which, though less accurate and malicious than his own, might nevertheless have been the more painful.

It may be in self-defence, too, that one takes a jocose, humorous attitude towards his or her own failures and misfortunes. This kind of self-defence, however, is often a defence not so much against an external attack but against oneself, against pessimism, depression, the feeling of hopelessness, despair. A capacity to treat one's own misfortunes and the treacherous nature of life with a smile is indeed a very important skill in the difficult art of living. This subject, however, is beyond the scope of the discussion of the therapeutic function of the comical.

Laughter: A Social Weapon



Universal Fear of Being Ridiculed

Any individual receives ridicule as very unpleasant and humiliating. Public ridicule may break down someone's career, deprive him of social respect and mark him with the stigma of dishonour sometimes for life. In his *Highbrow Ladies* Moliere ridiculed Trissotin who had been a respected member of the Academy and an acclaimed poet. As a result of staging the play Trissotin lost all his social respect forever and everybody, his friends included, turned away from him. This example explains why the fear of being ridiculed seems to be socially universal and may be found in both children and the richest and mightiest who equally share the pain of being derided and mocked at. Any parents' and teachers' admonitions mean nothing for a child if his friends do not approve of them and ridicule them. Even the most convincing and rational arguments appear weak and insignificant if derided by the school friends or colleagues from the neighbourhood. The same mechanism works in the case of adults.

Particularly sensitive in this respect are the Japanese. During World War II the Japanese seamen were warned that if they did not observe discipline and order while getting on lifeboats after their ship had been destroyed "the world would laugh at them" because the Americans would film them and make public showings in New York. For the Japanese being ridiculed by the world is more dreadful than violence. Still not long ago the official oath taken

by a Japanese borrower of money was that he agreed to be publicly ridiculed in case he did not pay his debt.[33] The feeling of shame and the fear of being ridiculed are not characteristic of the Japanese only. Also in Europe they seem to regulate individual behaviour. There are still husbands who do not share household duties with their wives because they are afraid of losing their manly dignity and becoming ridiculous as a result of their washing up or cleaning the house. A husband whose wife has committed adultery is traditionally subject to ridicule and infamy. Therefore for many husbands the very fact of their wives's unfaithfulness is less painful than the mocking commentaries and gossips which present them in the degrading and humiliating role of cuckolds. Typical doubts ("How do I look now?" or "What will people think of me?") encourage people to take energetic actions in other situations, too. Prominent and powerful people are not free from the fear of becoming ridiculous, either. A venomous attack against Napoleon Bonaparte staged by English caricaturists such as Gillray, Rowlandson and Cruikshank moved him to helpless anger so that he demanded later that in the Amiens Peace Treaty with England (1802) a special clause be included according to which caricaturists and pamphleteers were to be treated on a par with murderers and forgers of money. Napoleon's Corsican origin is not the sole source of his sensitivity and vehemence in this respect. The British who are traditionally seen as cold-blooded and self-possessed have reacted similarly in such situations. During the reign of James I a Pole named Stercovius had written a malicious satire on Scots which enraged the king so much that issued an order to find Stercovius and kill him. The king's order was carried out even though it required much effort and money since at that time Stercovius lived in Poland. In order to prevent similar cases in the future in 1609 James I issued a bill which interdicted the publication of any pamphlets, lampoons, comedies, etc.[34]

Three centuries later the British Foreign Secretary Austin Chamberlain felt so offended by Boris Yefimov's caricature (*Izvestya*, January 1926) that in protest he issued a note to the Soviet Union. United Nations general assemblies have also witnessed many such incidents.

During the Stalinist period in the Soviet Union telling "anti-official" jokes was punished with a long-term prison or labour camp sentence. Among political prisoners there was a considerable number of tellers of political jokes (called *anegdotchiki* in Russian) who were treated as "the enemies of the people". The opinion at that time held that some of the "great constructions of communism" such as for example the famous White Sea canal were erected mainly by the *anegdotchiki* under "re-education".

Moliere observed that people tolerate an ordinary rebuke more easily than ridicule and prefer to be seen as bad rather than ridiculous. Apparently nothing has changed in this respect. People accept a "serious" and "objective" criticism which contains also positive remarks about a person or an institution and suggestions on possible improvements more easily than a ridiculing satirical criticism which as a rule evokes in the person criticized a wish to retaliate in the name of authority or respect for power.

Sensitivity concerning one's own ridiculousness is used by the social regulatory mechanism of the public opinion. Laughter is one of the most effective sanctions against those individuals who break the habits of their community and violate the existing norms.[35]

For Bergson laughter signals the absence of an individual's adaptation to the requirements of a group. By means of ridicule society tames eccentricity and avenges the abuse of freedom and breaking the social norms.[36] Offenses concerning fashion, social habits, linguistic behaviour, and the norms regulating emotional and intellectual reactions are interpreted in terms of violating the social norms. Society retaliates with such sanctions as mockery, derision, indignation, contempt, obloquy, etc.[37] Yet public opinion is by no means homogeneous. From an individual point of view public opinion does not have to represent an opinion of the majority but rather an opinion of the closest social milieu or an opinion of the people who for some reasons are important and whose judgments are highly valued. One may then shield oneself against the attacks of the representatives of another social group with the support of one's own group or even of a few people whose ideas one accepts as accurate. Mockery and derision, however, are capable of piercing even this armour

within which we try to hide against the attack of others. Mockery and derision are unpleasant and humiliating even when we are absolutely certain they are unjust and when we are convinced as to the moral and intellectual inferiority of our scoffers. If, however, we are lonely and mockery besets us all around we will feel humiliated and unhappy. Once we manage to extricate ourselves from such as situation we will do anything in the future to avoid getting involved in it again.

Educational Functions of the Comical in Civilized Societies

Unlike its primitive counterpart, the civilized society has considerably reduced the educational role of ridicule. The function of educating both children and adults has been assigned to specialized institutions such as school, the church, judicature, and other kinds of organizations, unions, associations, etc. Education has also become one of the most important functions of art. But public opinion still remains an instrument of exerting social control and shaping life attitudes. The educational institutions mentioned above make use of a variety of means to control human behaviour but a joke, mockery and derision are still among them. Let us not forget that the punishment of pillory was still quite frequently used in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Thinkers representing various epochs and systems of values have been well aware of the educational capacities of the comical. The Romans had a saying that *satira ridendo castigat mores*. Blaise Pascal emphasized the educational role of ridicule. Bergson saw an essential and specific feature of comedy in the intention of rectifying errors. He took this to be a proof that comedy was much closer to life's reality than tragedy[38] and claimed that contrary to the protagonist of a tragedy the protagonist of a comedy does take notice of the opinion people hold about him.

Philosophers' views are shared by ethnologists and ethnographers who see the sensitivity to ridicule and the human tendency to mock at others as very strong educational factors. The writers of comedies and the satirists, too, were aware of the importance of their educational role. Moliere, who helped create

modern comedy, was convinced that the end of comedy lies in rectifying human errors and that satire exerts a remedial influence since nothing moves people so much as making them see their vices. People withstand punishment more easily than ridicule.[39] In a similar vein Lessing claimed that laughter is the strongest and most effective ethical means. Gogol wrote that "Laughter is a mighty thing. It deprives nobody of his life and property yet when faced with it a sinner feels like a fettered hare."[40]

The educational merits of the comical have been specifically understood by the Freudians. Reason and morality are important factors which set limits to, and impose restrictions on, the realization of natural human drives. Yet the desire for something forbidden remains even though it has been repressed and expelled from the consciousness. This compels us to renew and strengthen the restriction incessantly. Comedy provides an excellent occasion for such a move for it ridicules human attitudes and actions which embody the desires existing in our subconsciousness. According to Sypher, we laugh at Tartuffe because we may not wish to disclose, even to ourselves, that we may desire power, women, and money more than piety. We laugh at Falstaff saying that honour is only a word "to prevent his damaging our convictions which are taboo."[41]

The comical may also be skillfully used as an educational means at school. This aspect of the comical was discussed by Frantisek Kratky. He claimed that children are naturally inclined towards joy and gaiety and therefore badly tolerate incessant solemnity and severity. Healthy laughter frees and stimulates child's activity at school while excessive gravity puts a brake on it. The means of the comical are particularly useful to dispel tiredness and weariness. Teachers and preceptors have known for a long time that being amusing is an efficient means of making a child stop crying. The sense of the comical found in children is basically very sharp, at times almost cruel and contains many elements of malicious and hurting derision. Any attempts to eradicate such a sense of the comical are ineffective and hence the only way to mitigate the children's cruel and brutal sense of the comical is to substitute for it with its higher and more dignified form.[42]

The comical may be also used to ridicule improper behaviour. Friedrich Nietzsche approved of the teacher's use of irony to influence his or her pupils. When taken in, irony humiliates and shames the person whom it concerns but at the same time evokes "good resolutions" and gratitude together with respect towards the ironist who is then seen as a doctor.[43] Indeed, irony may be an effective cure for presumption, conceit and other human weaknesses. It may lead one to feel shame and self-dissatisfaction, induce self-criticism, etc. To be precise, however, we shall note that contrary to Nietzsche's claim an ironic treatment of a pupil by his teacher does not always lead to gratitude. Sometimes it may produce an emotion very distant from gratitude or even quite opposite to it.

Mockery and derision used as repressive means should be administered very carefully to children, and to those among them in particular who pose difficulties and lack the atmosphere of love. What such children require is not irony but tender and warm humour. Irony and derision may hurt a child very deeply, deepen an existing complex or the conflict with others or produce one leading in extreme cases to a loss of spiritual contact with the child. It is obvious that different forms of the comical which make use of different means have different educational aims. First and foremost the satirical comical educates by means of criticism and the condemnation of evil. Satire is always a form of negation and disapproval. Addressing the means of the satirical comical to a person is a form of punishment. Satirical ridicule should make the person ridiculed feel humiliated, ashamed and disappointed with himself. It aims at discouraging one from behaving improperly and stimulates him to rectify his mistakes. The satirical attitude to a person should evoke in the observers contempt, indignation and anger. In general, satire shapes the attitude of criticism and intransigence towards evil.

The humorous comical has slightly different educational functions. The main difference is that a humorous treatment of a phenomenon does not involve its condemnation. It contains the elements of a friendly, indulgent and tender criticism which aim at admonition rather than punishment. Hence, from an educational viewpoint, a humorous attitude to the phenomena which

are evil is abortive from the start. The humorous comical, however, may fulfil a morally constructive role which as such is unavailable for the satirical comical. A light humorous slant to the sublime makes it less severe and closer to the heart so that instead of cool respect it evokes in us warm feelings. As an example we may take the figure of Lenin as presented in Romm's films *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918*. Thus humour educates not only by showing vices and mistakes as negative but by making a positive ideal more congenial, too. Humour is a loyal ally of tolerance and an enemy of all fanaticism, dogmatism and totalitarism. This is one of the reasons why no artist ever attempted to present the figure of Stalin in a humorous manner. Any, even most friendly, humorous slant to such a presentation would have been fatal for the purpose of its evoking the religious emotion of admiration for the "Great Leader". Only the gods of polytheist religions are not devoid of human weaknesses and may safely be presented in a humorous manner. "For an optimist - wrote the Polish writer and humourist Bolesław Prus - every man is decent, for a pessimist suspicious, whereas a humourist whose interest in the human race is universal sees in every man both decent and villainous aspects."[44] People who represent the attitude of humour in their lives do not demand much from others and from the world around them, yet at the same time are not predisposed to interpret things in dark colours. Seeing evil in existing reality does not make a sufficient reason to question the meaning of life. They know how to be lenient with respect to harmless weaknesses and do not think it appropriate to condemn all that does not conform to their likes and dislikes. They are not blind to their own vices and weaknesses, either, and can laugh even when mocked at by others. An attitude like this is close to ideal provided that its leniency does not go too far in accepting everything, even evil. Chekov was a great humourist both by his predisposition and temperament and yet even he was capable of a malicious satirical attitude to evil and was fighting it no less militantly than Swift and Saltykov-Shchedrin.

The educational role of purely entertaining comedies should not be overlooked, either, particularly when we take into account the importance and popularity of film comedies. Sociological studies show that film entertain-

ment is nowadays one of the most influential forms of shaping social consciousness. Its influence is particularly manifest in the realm of social manners and fashion (in the broadest sense). The mass film production has been dominated by conformist tendencies and the levelling of standards down to the expectations of mass viewers in both the propagated patterns of living and artistic tastes. Such tendencies are determined not only by commercial factors but by ideological preferences as well.

Political and Ideological Uses of the Comical

Suggestiveness, communicativeness and the discrediting efficiency of laughter has turned it into a potent, sometimes irreplaceable, means in political struggle.[45] Philosophers noticed this fact long ago and tried to analyze the essence of ridicule in this respect and find out the necessary conditions of its efficiency as the weapons in the struggle.

An important aspect which must be taken into account by those who intend to fight off social vices is that when one treats them seriously he may produce a result opposite to the one he has intended to achieve. A psychological mechanism of the attractive power of the forbidden is responsible for the fact that by criticizing vices one puts them in the limelight. That is why presenting them critically one should make use of the satirical means which show them to be disgusting and ridiculous degenerations. Lord Shaftesbury was convinced that humour and a joke are much more effective means of persuasion than interdiction and persecution. He claimed that Roman authorities would have been much more successful in their struggle to contain Christianity if instead of persecuting they had turned to ridicule combined with contempt and derision. Thus they would have avoided the production of martyrs and the consequent strengthening of the new faith.[46] In the opinion of Lunacharsky ridicule is particularly useful in the fight against what the enemy takes to be sacred or of the highest authority. Here no other weapon is so effective as laughter. "Sarcastic laughter not only refutes the enemy's principles but suddenly depreciates the meaning of what has been

accepted as sacred, and this can be achieved only by means of contemptuous laughter" which hurts very deeply and irrevocably.[47]

Alexander Herzen put it shortly that laughter is the best way to degrade Apis to the status of an ordinary bull.[48] For Mark Twain no god and no religion and no other institutions such as aristocracy or monarchy are capable of surviving mockery.[49]

The statements quoted contain one accurate observation: apologetics and the comical exclude each other. On the other hand they raise doubts, particularly Twain's extreme statement. If mockery were indeed such a mighty weapon up till now there should be nothing left to ridicule. Is it really so easy to mock and degrade things taken to be sacred? It seems that the matter touched upon here is far from being simple and easy. Gods and religions frequently survive mockery directed against them and its authors often pay the highest price. Public opinion does not easily forgive mockery directed against what the majority treats as dear and sacred and treats ridiculing the ruling gods in terms of blasphemy. In order to be effective ridicule must attack an object which already does contain at least some ridiculousness. However necessary, this condition is not yet sufficient. An objective ridiculousness of a phenomenon must be taken notice of by human beings. Therefore there must be first a talented satirist capable of noticing the ridiculousness of a phenomenon and making it into an arresting representation. But he will not be able to jeopardize any social authority so long as he does not get in touch with the social groups which accept the authority he is about to ridicule. This, however, is not easy. Contrary to a scientist, a satirist does not address his work to a narrow group of recipients but aims at a mass audience whose members have various intellectual and moral capacities and standards and represent various degrees of the sense of the comical.[50] One may always give up reading a book or watching a film or a theatre performance which hurt what one takes to be sacred. A suggestive and impressive satirical work must encounter an intelligent recipient with a highly developed sense of the comical and of criticism for otherwise it shall not succeed in changing his attitude and making him notice the ridiculousness of what he has so far accepted as sacred

and sublime. Even the most talented satirist will not be able to unmask the true nature of something falsely great or sacred if his work is never read by its worshippers. This idea may be formulated into a general principle that a satirist's efforts to educate his audience or fight off his enemies are effective only when his works find an addressee. The most comprehensive account of the conditions of ridicule's efficiency was given by Lunacharsky. First, the one who ridicules should be convinced as to the inferiority and the fragility of the object ridiculed. Secondly, laughter should evoke a feeling of degradation and the loss of self-confidence in the person ridiculed. Finally, ridicule should seem justified and convincing for the observers.[51] Obviously, the comical is employed as a weapon not only in art. Such means of the comical as mockery, irony, joke, parody, travesty, caricature, etc., may be used in political and ideological struggles directly, without the agency of artworks.

The Comical and Derision In Argumentation

Philosophers were not only aware of the enormous possibilities of the polemical use of various forms of the comical but used them skillfully in argumentation as well. Among them Socrates who almost always ridiculed his opponents has definitely become a classic in this respect. Ostensibly accepting the opinions of his opponent and with his help Socrates drew from them consequences which were internally inconsistent, absurd, contradicting the theses accepted initially, out of gear with logic or common sense or unacceptable for his opponent for some other reasons.

At the same time, however, Socrates thanked his opponent very modestly for instruction, expressed his admiration for his wisdom and only in the end, when he managed to discredit his opponent's arguments and show how big is the contrast between his praise and the real value of his opponent's arguments, he pretended he could not understand how this could have happened.

Mockery was also used by Blaise Pascal in his polemic with the Jesuits, and by Voltaire. Voltaire's *Candide* presents an excellent example of discrediting a philosophical thesis. It completely ridicules the convictions of teleologists that the present world is the best possible world. Voltaire's method is quite

simple. He makes Pangloss repeat the thesis every now and then and confronts it with reality dominated by tyranny, fanaticism, cruelty, injustice, poverty, diseases and other natural calamities which leave people helpless and defenseless.

Karl Marx was another philosopher who employed mockery, irony and wit in his numerous philosophical and political polemics. The very title of his book in which he criticizes the ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon *The Poverty of Philosophy* is a malicious pun on Proudhon's work entitled *The Philosophy of Poverty*. In the twentieth-century Bertrand Russell makes an example of a philosopher who mastered the art of ridiculing opinions, arguments, philosophical and moral attitudes. Another philosopher who has displayed excellent mocking skills is Leszek Kołakowski (cf., for example, his polemical discussions with Father Kłósak).

From among the twentieth-century writers who also wrote essays and journalistic pieces Bernard Shaw was the master of mockery and wit. His Polish equivalent was Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński who led brilliantly mocking polemical discussions on both social and scientific matters.

Such facts could not pass unnoticed for specialists working on the theory of argumentation. Chaim Perelman sees ridicule as a potent argumentative weapon and says that claiming about an author that his ideas are unacceptable because they lead to ridiculous consequences is one of the strongest objections to be used in argumentation. To ridicule an adversary it suffices to prove that what he says contradicts logic or experience or is inconsistent with the ideas accepted by a given audience or a social group.[52] Perelman also emphasizes the extreme difficulties encountered by those who intend to challenge ridicule. To achieve that one needs courage and authority.

I shall now make an attempt to systematize the possible applications of wit, joke, irony or mockery in discussion and argumentation.

The forms of the comical may be used in discussion either as a more or less objective argument or a polemical device which is not an objective argument and at times borders on dishonesty. It is difficult to draw a line between these two polemical functions of the comical, the more so because at times a

ridiculing utterance may be partly an objective argument and partly a polemical device.

The possibilities of using the comical in a polemic, however, are to some extent restricted since the means of the comical are rarely used as arguments to justify the truth and the accuracy of a positive thesis directly. Their function is almost exclusively to refute and discredit the theses, theories, stances and arguments of our adversary. In case there obtains a contradiction between our own thesis and the thesis of our adversary, refuting his thesis immediately proves the truth of our claim.

There are specific differences between the kinds of polemics depending on whether they are conducted orally or in a written form. A written polemic is basically more thorough and precise since its form makes room for an adequate selection and, if need be, for taking over some of the formulations of the adversary, for precise measuring out of words for a mocking or ironic commentary, for masterly construction of a witty reply, a caricature of ideas or a parody of the manner of argumentation or the expression of ideas. On the other hand, the written form of a polemic has at its disposal no methods of ridicule similar to those which are applicable in its oral version even if only in their weakened form. Due to such factors as the situational contexts, the use of gestures, intonation and facial expressions, the possibility of employing the effects of a direct and immediate reply, finally the possibility of changing the subject imperceptibly and diverting the attention of the audience away from the heart of the matter (for example by directing their interest from a thesis which is difficult to refute to the errors committed while defending it, etc.), an oral discussion has additional chances of success in this respect.

I shall begin my presentation of the major methods of using the comical and derision in a polemic with a discussion of the methods common to both the written and oral polemical forms.

As an objective argument ridicule may be used to refute, unmask and discredit the theses, conceptions and stances of an adversary.

Ridiculing a thesis. Let us have a closer look at the manner in which Krzysztof Teodor Toeplitz enters a polemic with a Polish journalist Andrzej

Święcicki who claimed that the institution of entrance examinations to the universities was obsolete. To begin with he refers to the information mentioned earlier by the media that the results of the examinations have been very bad and that the candidates' knowledge concerning basic facts is appalling. If so, the thesis in question must be obviously true: if the candidates' knowledge is insufficient, it must be the exams which have reached the critical stage and bear responsibility for such a state of affairs. Thus Toeplitz stages his first attack against the thesis of his adversary. Using irony he creates the contrast between his ostensible approval of the thesis and the real contents of his utterance based on absurd reasoning. What Toeplitz does here is actually not so much ridiculing directly his adversary's thesis but rather making use of absurd reasoning which he has made up himself and is now ascribing to his opponent. Having referred at the beginning to the press, Toeplitz, however, has situated the refuted utterance in an appropriate chronological and social context and thus has made it into a conclusion drawn from the situation described by the press which should have been noticed by Swiecicki.

Toeplitz goes further and re-directs his attack saying that "The author quotes an example of many Western universities and suggests that psychometric tests testing the candidates' aptitudes should substitute for the examinations. This would bring an obvious advantage that we could learn whether a candidate who appeared unaware of what river Warsaw is situated on is potentially capable of taking in such knowledge." Toeplitz is again ironic here and reduces the utterance of his opponent *ad absurdum*.

As an example of *ridiculing a stance* I shall quote a short opinion of Zygmunt Kałużyński, a Polish film critic, about those critics who try to verify the reality presented in an artwork: "Criticism verifying the reality of an artwork is like someone who cuts a statue and discovers there are no bowels, liver, kidneys, etc., inside." Thus Kałużyński ridicules a certain stance by means of a suggestive comparison with an obviously absurd activity.

To illustrate the technique of *ridiculing a conception* I shall use Leszek Kołakowski's polemic with the conception of absolutist, casuistic and omnis-

cient ethics which attempts to define all possible moral situations, even in their most detailed variations, which a human being may find himself or herself in, in order to measure out the amount of responsibility and guilt most precisely.

To begin with, the author quotes carefully chosen fragments of Father Antoni Borowski's *Moral Theology* and then comments on them in the following way: "I am reading it and I feel envy: if only I could know all that! My Lord! I would have known that it is better to hand a ladder to a thief (a remote indirect participation) than hold it for him (a close indirect participation); I would have known that when talking about a family of six I should treat it as a moral unity instead of thinking of every member separately for in the latter case the amount of sins is six times smaller. I would have also known that if I hate one man I can go on hating as many as I like because my sin will not consequently became greater; that it is more profitable to visit a brothel occasionally (an intermittent occasion) than to keep an anti-religious magazine at home (a constant occasion). I could also have enjoyed an artful manner in which someone else has committed lechery as long as he did not violate the natural law. I would have been aware of when I am allowed to wish the death of my own son. In short - I would have known all that is indispensable for living."

Kołakowski successfully ridicules such ethics by discrediting it in both intellectual and ethical terms. The very choice and concentration of some of Father Borowski's formulations produce the impression of absurdity of his conception. Kołakowski, however, goes further and shows how an ethics like this may be skillfully and casuistically manipulated to justify immoral purposes.

Moral theology evaluates sins according to the gradation scale which may be summarized in the formula "this is bad, and that is even worse," this sin is lesser and that one is graver. Kołakowski reverses the interpretation according to the principle that "this is bad, but that is better." He is very suggestive and convincing in showing that a good knowledge of theology together with an artful interpretation of deeds under evaluation allow one to do evil and

escape punishment or achieve the same goal with a lesser moral responsibility.

Thus Kołakowski proves that such a conception of ethics may lead to results which contradict the principles and purposes of any ethics.

A technique frequently used in polemics is to move from expressing disapproval concerning the thesis one does not accept to criticism of the arguments employed to justify the thesis.

A case like that may be found in Bernard Shaw who in one of his essays disagrees with a traditional opinion that the natural and exclusive vocation of women, their truly feminine realm of interests and activities is the kitchen and the nursery. Shaw's conviction is that the mere fact that woman bears children does not determine her interests and household duties in the same natural way as it makes her capable of breast-feeding her baby. Woman's nature does not automatically circumscribe the sphere of her activity for life. In his discussion of the subject Shaw concentrates primarily on ridiculing various arguments which are called up to support the view he is trying to discredit and employs manifold techniques of ridicule such as reducing the opponents' arguments to absurdity, showing that they are groundless, drawing surprising but accurate comparisons, parodying the manner of reasoning and caricaturing the opinions of some women on the question.

The techniques of ridiculing the opponent's arguments are manifold and cannot be exemplified by means of one example no matter how extensive it might be. The method which seems to yield the best results is that of proving that the arguments and the opponent's way of reasoning are absurd. It consists in drawing absurd consequences from the opponent's arguments, comparing them with an absurd action, applying the same line of reasoning in another realm where its absurdity becomes manifest more clearly (parody, caricature), etc.

Another technique used to ridicule written and oral forms of polemical arguments is *turning one's attention* from the essence of the dispute to the matters of marginal importance in which victory can be more easily won. This device is used to ridicule the adversary's arguments. Instead of challenging

his thesis which is difficult to refute one attacks some of his less fortunate arguments which may easily be ridiculed and thus create an impression that the main thesis has been discredited as well. Employing this device is easier in an oral discussion than in its written form where manipulating the critical attention of the reader is much more difficult.

Arguments *ad personam*. Instead of refuting and ridiculing the opinions and the arguments one may ridicule the adversary personally. This device was frequently used by the opponents of Darwin's theory of evolution who suggested that indeed Darwin might be partly right for they were ready to believe that he and his followers had descended from an ape, yet argued that he should refrain from generalizing what applies to some people only.

Another asset of being witty is that it is a good way for an author to win the sympathy of his audience. Being witty, however, cannot be classified as a dishonest device for it is no device in itself but rather an extra-objective polemical function of the comical. On the other hand the importance of this function cannot be ignored. Winning the sympathy of the audience may be decisive, for example, in a public discussion which precedes the taking of important decisions by the meeting.

Oral polemic usually employs specific forms of the comical since it is easier to employ wit and mockery as dishonest polemical devices in an oral polemic where the comical may be used to change the subject artfully, turn the attention of the audience from our own false thesis with the help of exaggerating and ridiculing an argumentative error committed by our too heated opponent, or avoid taking a clearly defined position.

One should remember that in an oral discussion the situational context of an utterance may invest words and sentences otherwise ostensibly banal and ordinary with a strong comical meaning. The situation may be so unique that any attempt to relate an utterance which a direct observer received as very witty may prove futile even if the utterance were related word to word.

This fact bears responsibility for the effectiveness of an immediate and witty reply in an oral discussion. A reply which makes the audience laugh at the opponent may depress him, destroy his self-assurance and thus decide our

victory. It is only in an oral discussion that the audience are given a chance to verify the speed of a disputant's reaction, and the disputant has an opportunity of making use of the comical of gesture, intonation and situation alongside the verbal comical.

The conversation between Diogenes and Aristippus provides us with an example of a witty reply. Calling on Diogenes who was just cooking some vegetable soup, Aristippus said with compassion: "If you could ingratiate yourself with Dionysos the tyrant you would not have to make do with vegetables." Diogenes's reply was quick: "And if you learned how to make do with vegetables you would not have to ingratiate yourself with Dionysos."

Winston Churchill had a record of witty replies. An annoyed lady told him, "Were I your wife, I would feed you poison in your tea," Churchill's reply was immediate, "Were you my wife, I would instantly drink the tea."

I did not intend my short presentation to contain a comprehensive discussion of these interesting questions but rather meant it to signal their importance. Instead of a systematic discussion of various techniques of ridicule I have tried to point to the various functions of ridicule in discussion. Ridicule is used in journalism and the oral polemic in a specific manner, yet at the same time it employs most of the techniques of evoking the comical which find their application in art. That is why I think it is not necessary to present a typology of various techniques of polemical ridicule.[53]

Satire as a Militant Art

Satire concentrates on the phenomena which deviate visibly from the principal social norms accepted by the author and his followers and which are socially harmful, often dangerous (though mainly for those who oppose them). These phenomena do not have to be morally evil. Ignorance and stupidity may also become objects of satire, particularly when, in imitating learning and culture, they become pretentious and aggressive; this is the moment when they may lead to ethically relevant consequences.

Phenomena whose significance is accidental and trivial and which are easy to overcome do not make proper objects for satire. If their defeat is obvious

they cannot succeed in evoking the uncompromising, angry or contemptuous laughter typical of satire. Satirical laughter is accusing, venomous and malicious. Satirical ridicule always aims at a purpose set by the satirist. Its main task is to unmask and fight off an evil which may appear as either a relatively separate phenomenon or a negative aspect of a more complex but generally positive phenomenon. In the latter case his attempts to uproot the evil aim at healing what is generally acceptable even though its details are defective. Since the satirist alone is obviously unable to overcome the evil he must win and mobilize public opinion for his case. Only rarely the very fact of disclosing the ridiculousness and triviality of a phenomenon and the resulting explosion of discrediting laughter are synonymous with its defeat.

When evil goes unnoticed the satirist is trying to unmask it, disclose its harmful actions, evoke anger and indignation and mobilize the audience to fight it off. When evil is an obvious fact to anyone but at the same time is mighty and terrible, the satirist looks for all its weaknesses, tries to evoke the emotions of superiority and contempt in the hearts of its opponents and thus encourage them and convince them that victory is at hand. Such was the position of, for example, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Swift, the satirists living in the countries under occupation, the representatives of ethnic and national minorities. On the other hand, if the phenomena are indeed harmful and the people are capable of overcoming them the satirist should do all he can to convince the people that evil cannot be tolerated and mobilize public opinion against it. It is obvious that the negative phenomenon should then become the major object of satire and that the satirist's intention will be to bring it into prominence or represent it in enlarged proportions. If he does not do so and simultaneously is trying to prove that the evil he is after is specific, marginal and that all must end happily since the majority of people are honest and will very easily manage to get rid of evil, he will achieve the opposite result to the one he intended: he will discharge anger, minimize the significance of evil, create an atmosphere of complacency and self-appeasement. To illustrate this I shall use the example of Soviet comedy writing. Its development was severely hampered by the conceptions forced by official

criticism and cultural politics in the 1950s when it was officially claimed that negative phenomena are not typical of socialism and that various deficiencies making themselves visible in social life should be presented carefully and with moderation and balanced with the positive phenomena "typical" of socialism. Good and evil should be measured out in appropriate proportions and a positive protagonist should occupy the central position even in a satirical work.

A militant author does not himself have to manifest anger, contempt and a hostile attitude to evil. His major work, however, must concentrate on evoking them in his audience. He may achieve this end not only through infecting his audience with his own emotions but by representing the phenomena in an appropriate manner as well. The methods to be used may be either that of exaggerating the dimensions of a negative phenomenon or decomposing its features in order to concentrate and put into prominence its vices, emphasizing the phenomenon, or simply objectively relating the facts to evoke disapproval and instigate the audience to an active fight against them. The character of satire is determined by its object and its aims. Satirical works are characterized by a considerable ideological and emotional engagement and suggestiveness of emotionally charged judgments determined by the social position and the system of values accepted by the author. True satire is also inherently topical.

The topicality of satire is not synonymous with its immediacy and evanescence. Some theorists, however, are prone to ascribe to satire only an immediately interventionist character and a passing significance. Evanescence is by no means an attribute of satire but simply makes an inherent feature of mediocre or weak works (including of course mediocre satirical pieces). Prominent satirical works, though products of direct reactions to contemporary phenomena, do not lose their artistic merits and topicality with the passing of time. Even though the objects against which they were directed are no longer there they do remain of current importance for almost always there are other phenomena similar in some respects to their primary objects.

It was Lunacharsky who commented upon a problem of great interest to the theory of satire. He holds a view that the solution to the problem of

whether one can laugh at evil bears important consequences for the explanation of the essence of satire. Generally speaking, evil makes satire's basic object. The problem is not simple. Evil produces terror, even despair, which can hardly be reconciled with laughter which in normal circumstances expresses gaiety. The source of the satirist's laughter is the intention of ridiculing and eliminating evil. According to Lunacharsky the satirist tries to make people laugh at evil and intends to convince them that evil is basically weak and dismal. He tries to overcome the paralysing fear of evil, demonstrate all its weaknesses and prove to the opponents of evil that at least in some (intellectual, moral, etc.) respects they are superior to it because laughter at someone means that the person laughing feels superior to the person laughed at. Most frequently, however, the satirist only pretends he is convinced as to his enemy's weakness, tries to suggest that the enemy is only ridiculous and powerless while as a matter of fact he is not so assured. Moreover, in most cases he is aware of his helplessness and of the power of evil he has challenged. The sense of powerlessness with respect to evil makes satire even more venomous and gives it a sarcastic slant. Swift and Saltykov-Shchedrin are good examples here.

From his considerations Lunacharsky draws the conclusion that satire achieves its true greatness when a new class or a social group has created an ideology superior to the ideology of the ruling class but has not yet reached the level of development sufficient for defeating it in material terms. Hence the victorious spirit of such satire, its contempt for the opponent dyed with fear, hence the venomousness, an enormous power of hatred, hence its frequent sorrow. Lunacharsky claims that the conditions for the emergence of great satire require that the phenomenon ridiculed by a satirist be of lower moral and ideological standards than those of his class yet stronger materially.[54]

Lunacharsky's account, however, seems to be one-sided. What he is talking about is only one out of the many basic situations a satirist may work in. Lunacharsky is right when he claims that when evil ridiculed is so strong and menacing that it paralyses its opponents the satirist's task is to comfort them

and invest them with the hope of victory. He achieves this aim by means of displaying the weaknesses of evil and dwarfing its might. Such was the situation of satire in the countries occupied during the Second World War. There are cases when society ignores evil which, though in itself far from being a great and menacing power, is nonetheless harmful. Ignoring the negative phenomena in such cases cannot be tolerated. The satirist should then concentrate his efforts on making people aware of the harmful consequences of the phenomena he is interested in, on evoking their indignation and mobilizing the public opinion against evil. To achieve this aim it is often necessary to exaggerate the significance and importance of the harmful phenomenon.

Since laughter is capable of unmasking false greatness and overthrowing obsolete authorities it may be used in the struggle for social progress. Social institutions and relationships which have become outdated but do not wish to leave the stage of history voluntarily together with the people who have lost the sense of the real and live on the past or on illusions make a good object of mockery (Marx: the final phase of a historical formation is a comedy). If obsolete social phenomena represent any social values their attempts to curb an objective social development may be tragicomical and even tragic; if, on the other hand, they have already lost all their worth and former power, their attempts may only produce contemptuous laughter.

Ridicule serves progress first and foremost when it becomes a tool of discrediting obsolete social relationships, institutions, manners, ideologies, etc.

Moliere's comedies are a good example of the manifold use of the comical in the struggle for progress. Moliere represented both the social interests of the young French bourgeoisie and the modern rational thought which had attacked the medieval institutions of the church, science and judicature. All the forces of corrupted judicature basing its legal procedures on torture, the aggressively intolerant church defending its prerogatives with excommunication and the stake, and the science completely dominated by theology, fossilized, obscurantist and extremely dogmatist (the Sorbonne), united their efforts to counter rationalism. The new trends, however, found unexpected support in Moliere. Ridiculing the dogmatism and ignorance of official

medicine, the jealousy and despotism of fathers and husbands, the treatment of women in terms of property, his comedies helped revolutionize many realms of life from medicine to customs and manners. Molieres are not born in every epoch, but historically speaking he was not alone in turning laughter into a potent weapon in the struggle for progress. Rabelais, Swift, Henry Fielding, Voltaire, Krasicki, Daumier, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Heine, Zapolska, Twain, Shaw, Mann, Mayakovsky, Moor, Brecht and many other authors who mastered mockery, irony and derision were militant supporters of progressive tendencies.

Laughter turned against an enemy aims at his weaknesses, exposes all that makes him inferior and weaker than he seems to be. It may make even the strongest opponent lose his self-assurance, and improve the frame of mind of his victims. That is why laughter has always been so popular with the oppressed, the persecuted and the exploited.[55]

The satirical comical is often employed not only to discredit an enemy but also to tighten discipline among the members of one's own class. Tightening discipline is particularly demanded by a class when its discipline either has not yet been formed, or is disintegrating. The need for discipline is strongest when a given class is only rising and its members have not developed their class consciousness, and the actions of its representatives manifest various forms of cultural backwardness, egoism and pathetic imitation of higher classes. Moliere was an artist who helped the young bourgeoisie create an excellent school of internal discipline.[56] Many of his comedies ridiculed particular representatives of the bourgeoisie and aimed to shape their class consciousness and teach them self-respect.

A comical work may be either in attack or in defence. It may be either revolutionary or conservative. The authors of comedies often attack those whose activities disturb the existing order, and the interests of the ruling classes in particular. Satirical attacks of conservatives may hit both sworn revolutionaries and those individuals whose autonomy raises not always fully articulated doubts of the members of society as to their own life attitudes, convictions and beliefs. A satirical work of this kind always finds grateful

recipients among those who are interested in maintaining the *status quo*, who repress their doubts and strengthen their self-respect and their beliefs. The comical is then subjected to conservative rule and reinforces existing social relationships and supports social conformism. Laughing at phenomena which deviate from what has been universally accepted as proper, correct and normal, conservative social groups repress doubts concerning the sense and justice of the existing social order, traditional institutions and customs or of human existence as such.

Conservative elements are to be found in the works of the most prominent satirists. In *The Clouds* Aristophanes ridicules Socrates and the sophists as the instigators of social unrest who raise doubts and impair faith in the sacred and traditional piety and therefore deserve condemnation and punishment. In *The Frogs* he directs his attacks against the intellectualism and rationalism of Euripides.

Moliere's works are not free from conservative tendencies, either. One of his indirectly expressed theses concerned women and their intellectual ambitions (*Highbrow Ladies*). Moliere, who advocated progressive social ideas, expresses here a view that women should give up learning because their minds are not up to science. The idea of women's intellectual and economic emancipation is undoubtedly progressive. But it violated existing conventions and traditions and was ridiculed by many otherwise prominent and progressive people.

Among the Soviet theorists of the comical there are some whose fascination with the possibilities of using the comical as a weapon in the struggle for progress is responsible for one-sidedness of their interpretation of the social role of the comical. They claim that "the weapon of laughter has always turned against the world of violence, social injustice, conditions of existence inadequate for the dignity of man" and that satire has always been involved in the struggle with social evil and the powers of reaction.[57] They seem to ignore the fact that many social groups of various provenance need the comical to achieve different purposes and that the comical may be assigned not only a progressive, revolutionary role but a conservative and backward one as well.

History supplies an abundance of examples of progressive forces being an object of ridicule for reactionaries. So many noble and wise thoughts, useful inventions, scientific theories, innovative artworks which were later accepted as great, and necessary social reforms have met with derision. Impressionist painting, socialist ideas, the achievements of major social revolutions, railways, bicycles or vaccination, to mention but a few examples, have all met with caricature and ridicule. Thus there are good reasons to suggest that the analysis of the possibility of utilizing the means of the comical in social struggle cannot ignore any of the major aspects of using the comical for such purposes.

The use of direct ridicule and mockery against progressive social tendencies and phenomena is not the sole form of the conservative application of the comical. We shall not forget that the means of the comical are capable of both negating and affirming, concentrating the recipient's attention on some negative social phenomena and masking them. A comedy writer may sharpen and bring to light a clash of interests, opinions, ideals and customs, but at the same time he may also work to moderate the conflict. Laughter is capable of belittling evil and thus weakening people's anger and indignation. It may turn the recipients' attention away from essential and complex existential conflicts and concentrate it on matters of secondary importance. The suggestiveness of laughter and the ambiguity of a joke facilitate the use of them to mask harmful intentions, complicate problems and turn the addressee's attention from the gist of a problem.

Demobilizing and deceiving public opinion, turning its attention away from essential questions, putting its vigilance to sleep, are not socially indifferent and are frequently employed as means in social struggle.

The tendency to produce purely entertaining art which would only amuse and make people laugh and would not be socially tendentious is itself a social tendency, as Lunacharsky accurately observed. Such role was ascribed to the "crazy comedies" popular in North America by a Slovak theorist Kalina who claims that their function is turning the viewers' attention from their involvement in the affairs of life by engaging them for two hours in an illusion

of excellent amusement.[58] The comedy writer who reinforces the traditions and self-assurance of a group which is beginning to lose them will be more easily accepted by the public than the one who negates the values which the group accept as holy. Being most modest and least ambitious, the middle classes are in a particular need of affirmation of their views and ideals. Thus they need authors supporting their conviction that their life patterns are rigid and "robust" while other patterns are neither rational nor normal. In many countries the greatest popularity goes to comedies which support social conformism and complacency.

The conformist and "no-conflict" genre dominated Soviet comedy writing during the period of the personality cult. For some of the Soviet theorists and critics in the 1950s a new function of comedy was a direct presentation of what was socially positive. The famous theory of no conflict had become more than a theoretical construction, for the situation comedies with no negative protagonists had dominated the Soviet stage. The comical represented by such comedies as, for example, Ivan Pyrev's film *Cuban Cossacks* was elevated to the status of the specific and constitutive feature of any Soviet comedy and in practical terms resulted in an almost complete eradication of satire.

Comedies representing this kind of the comical accept the existing social system with its moral norms, an average artistic taste and the currently prevailing manners. They stop short of evaluating and accept anything which the statistical majority of viewers is ready to approve. Thus such works give up any ambitions to influence social consciousness and may even hinder the development of morals and manners. Thus, instead of serving progressive tendencies a potent weapon serves social degradation.

The best commentary on the social role of satire and the efficiency of the sharpest form of the comical typical of satire is to be found in the negative or even hostile attitude to satire displayed by individuals and groups which are threatened by it in the highest degree. There are three forms of discrediting and discriminating satire. The simplest and most universal method is the persecution of satirists and their works. Its forms range from publishing boycott and press campaign against them to prison, torture and murder. Even the

most prominent satirists had their share of misfortune. Juvenal was sent into exile to Egypt. Rabelais had to flee twice. Only the friendship with the king saved Moliere's head after *Tartuffe* had been staged. No one knows what would have happened to Swift had it been disclosed that he was the author of a lampoon calling for the boycott of British goods in revenge for closing down Irish workshops. (Walpole assigned three hundred pounds reward for finding the author.) Voltaire who had been jailed in the Bastille twice ended his life as an emigrant. The smell of the prison was known to Daumier and Daniel Defoe. The author of *Robinson Crusoe* was sentenced to the pillory three times. Sandor Petofi occupied the second position on the black list of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (the first position was taken by Karl Marx). Even Twain found himself in difficulties. The press and a part of public opinion hounded Chaplin so much that he had to leave the United States for ever and even his popularity could not help him. Also such Soviet writers as Mayakovsky and Zoshchenko were severely attacked by the Soviet press. Kurt Tucholsky and Bertold Brecht saved their lives only because they managed to escape from Nazi Germany. Bulgarian satirist Aleco Konstantinovich was less fortunate and was murdered.

Satire has also had, quite naturally one might add, numerous problems with censorship which not only prohibited the printing and distribution of satirical works but often ordered their burning.[59] Such was the fate of works by Rabelais, Defoe, Voltaire, Heine, and others. Fielding's satirical comedies were the direct cause of Walpole's bill which prohibited staging any drama without the agreement of the Lord Chancellor.

Another form of attack on satire, this time in the realm of theory, is the method of discrediting not only individual satirists and their works but satire in general. Adherents of this method try to prove that satire is, one, inefficient as a form of persuasion, two, ethically wrong because it hurts human dignity, and three, a form naturally devoid of almost any aesthetic merits, and most commonly having nothing to do with art. Many authors were attacked personally. They were presented as misanthropes (e.g. Swift), or people of pathological malice and evil for whom their work is exclusively a form of dis-

charging inborn aggressiveness and hostility towards people or of taking revenge on others for personal misfortunes. Among the critics of the artistic and social merits of satire we find Hegel, Meredith, Taine, Merezhkovsky, Chesterton (to mention the most prominent among them). The traditionally hostile attitude towards satire is still to be found in many theorists and critics. The works of Swift, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Twain, Hasek, even Gogol were interpreted as marginal and lacking in artistic merits. They were opposed to the lenient, compromising and quiet humorous writing praised for its humane values.

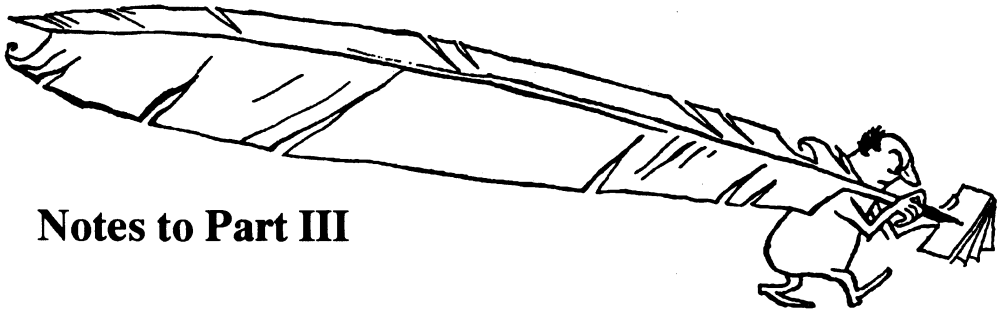
The third form of contesting the significance of satire is the method of misinterpretation which makes a selection from among the works of individual satirists and does not mention their satirical achievements either emphasizing other motifs in their works or ascribing to their art only an entertaining and humorous character.

An excellent satirist, Heine was presented posthumously as a purely romantic lyrical poet. Twain, Hasek and the classic of nineteenth-century Hungarian realist humorous writing Kalman Mikszath were reduced to being harmless jesters entertaining the people with amusing anecdotes.

We may conclude safely that satire's social engagement and the possibility of an effective employment of the comical in political and ideological struggle outside the realm of art is not to be negated. A necessary and essential correlation seems to exist between periods of social unrest and the periods of satire's flourishing. As a matter of principle great satirists emerged most often during periods of violent social transformations, wars or periods of struggle for national freedom. In such epochs the flourishing of satire as the most militant among the forms of the comical takes place not only in the greatest works. On the contrary, what happens then is the appearance of a mass production of satire in the form of the satirical press, posters and anonymous works. In Poland, for example, satire emerged during the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation but reached the peak of its development in the eighteenth century. Historically speaking this century was far from being peaceful and quiet in Poland. A comparable development of satire took

place during the Nazi occupation. The events of 1956 which began the de-Stalinization processes in the communist countries and the struggle for democracy produced an authentic explosion of political satire on a mass scale. With the social unrest calming down and the ensuing stabilization, satire became less and less militant and gave the floor to unambitious, purely entertaining cabarets.

Similar processes took place in Russia. Every revolutionary situation there produced a considerable animation in the satirical press. Satire reached its peak, however, during the two Russian revolutions. The events of 1905-1907 produced a decline of entertaining humorous writing and an enormous boom in the satirical press. Those years witnessed an appearance of over 300 satirical and humorous periodicals from radically leftist to the "sheets of laughter" of the Black Hundreds. The 1920s again contributed greatly to the history of Russian satirical periodicals. Ten years produced more than 200 titles. Revolutionary unrest at the end of the eighteenth century produced an increase in satirical periodicals not only in France but also in neighbouring Germany. The revolutions of 1830, 1848, and the Paris Commune each produced a boom in political satire in general and caricature in particular.



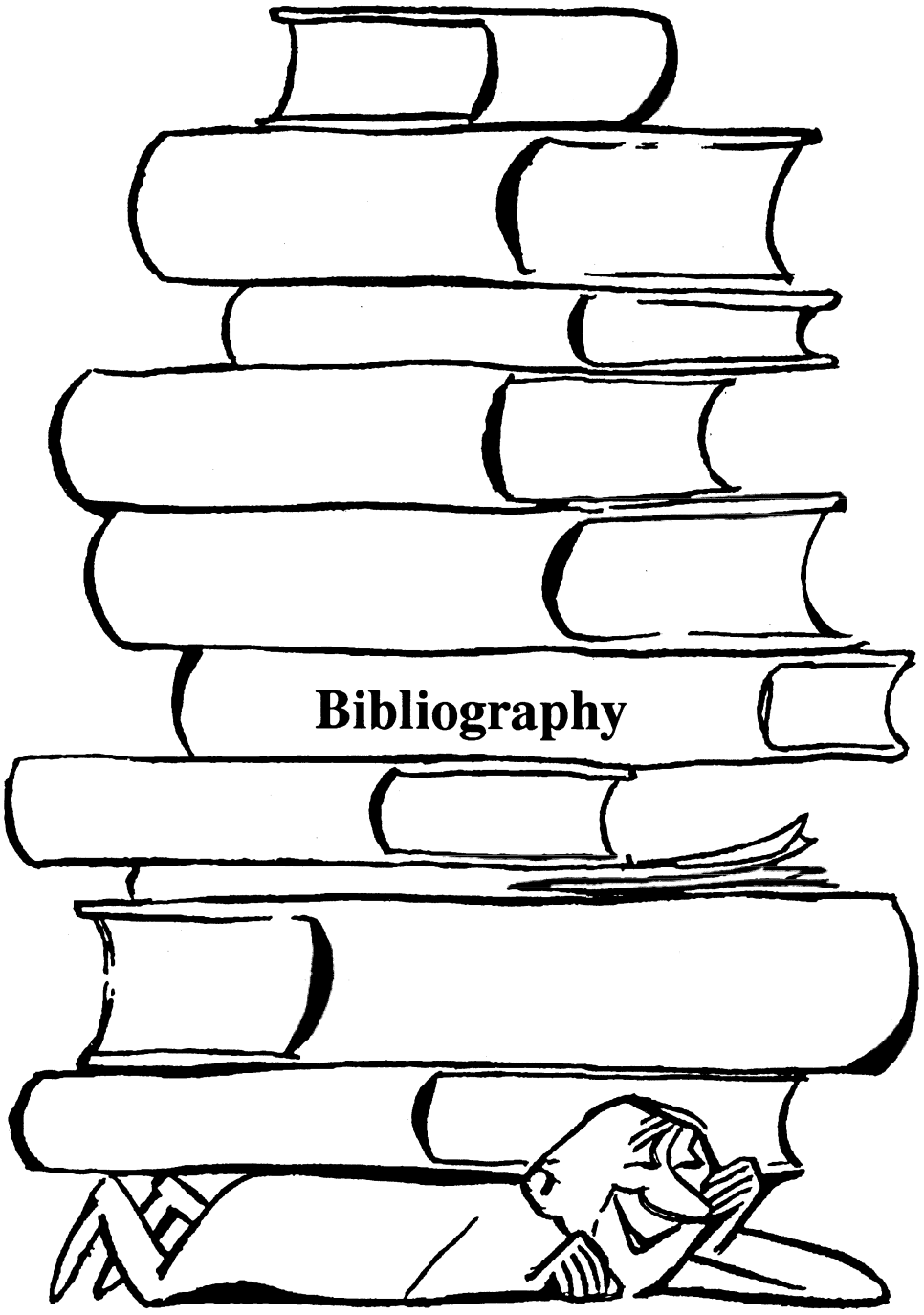
Notes to Part III

1. V. Belinsky, *W odpowiedzi Moskwitianinowi*, in *Zbiór artykułów* (Warsaw, 1953), p. 237.
2. E. Kucharski, "Komizm", *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1932, p. 249.
3. A. Lunacharsky, *Osnovy pozitivnoy estetiki* (Moscow, 1923), p. 99.
4. Y. Borev, *O komicheskom* (Moscow, 1957), p. 94-95.
5. S. Szuman, *O dowcipie i humorze* (Lvov, 1938), p. 10.
6. T. Boy-Żeleński, *Śmiech*, in *Pisma*, Vol. 18 (Warsaw, 1959), p. 28. According to Boy, the perception of the comical is "a joyful disregard of consciousness while performing a complex intellectual activity" (p. 26).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
8. D. Worcester holds a similar position in this respect. Cf. *The Art of Satire* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 37.
9. K. Chukovski, *Od dwóch do pięciu* (Warsaw, 1962), p. 235.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 252, 258.
12. Many authors emphasize the cognitive function of jokes. Cf. Szuman, *op. cit.*, p. 14; Borev: "An unexpected juxtaposition of things in a joke sharpens the real contrast and the contradictions of reality, shows them in a new light and discloses the essence of a phenomenon." *(O komicheskom* (Moscow, 1957), p. 95); T. Boy-Żeleński holds that a joke "is as it were a renewal of the real, an introduction of an element of surprise into the used-up matter of the real which makes it possible to discover the world in the manner of our childhood." (*Śmiech* in *Pisma*, Vol. 18, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24. Cf. also P. Beylin, "Komizm", *Wiedza i życie*, 1961, No. 6, p. 352.
13. Cf. P. Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York, 1927), p. 51.
14. Cf. R.C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton, N.J.), 1960, pp. 67, 77.
15. T. Peiper, *Komizm ekranowy*, in *Tędy* (Warsaw, 1930), p. 295.
16. Cf. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
17. Cf. B. Malinowski, *Szkice z teorii kultury* (Warsaw, 1958), pp. 353-354, 365-366.
18. B. Malinowski, *Życie seksualne dzikich* (Warsaw, 1938), pp. 379, 391.
19. Cf. E.S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (Oxford, 1929), p. 326.
20. *Op. cit.*, p. 372.
21. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

22. R. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-73.
23. Cf. Kolervo Oberg, "Crime and Punishment in Tlingit-Society", *American Anthropologist*, 1934, Vol. 36, pp. 152-153.
24. Cf. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 75, and J.H. Provinse, *The Underlying Sanctions of Plain Indian Culture*, in Fred Eggan (ed.), *Social Anthropology of North America Tribes* (Chicago, 1955), pp. 352, 356.
25. Cf. P. Beylin, "Komizm", *Wiedza i Życie*, 1961, No 6, p. 352.
26. W. Sypher, *The Meanings of Comedy*, in Robert W. Corrigan (ed.), *Comedy: Meaning and Form* (San Francisco, 1965), p. 53.
27. *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.
28. S. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, transl. by James Strachey (New York, 1963), pp. 102-103.
29. Cf. for example M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, transl. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass., 1968). Cf. also A. Lunacharsky, "O smyeche", *Literaturny Kritik*, No 4 (1935), p. 7.
30. Cf. Elliott, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
31. K. Irzykowski, *Zdobnictwo w poezji*, in *Walka o treść* (Warsaw, 1929), p. 32.
32. Cf., for example, Grzegorz Zaleski, *Satyra w konspiracji (1939-1944)* (Warsaw, 1958).
33. Cf. R. Benedict, *Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Cambridge, 1946), pp. 29, 261-273.
34. Cf. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267.
35. Lunacharsky holds that laughter is one of the most potent forms of boycott for public opinion to punish offenses. Cf. "O smyeche", *op. cit.*, p. 5. Elliott (*op. cit.*, p. 69) claims similarly that in every society in which a high social status depends on the opinion of other members of the group ridicule will undoubtedly be a powerful means deterring the people from deviant behaviour. People in general are afraid of shame and try to avoid the situations in which public derision could give them bad name. Cf. also E. Aubouin, *Les genres du risible* (Marseille, 1948), p. 17.
36. H. Bergson, "Laughter," in W. Sypher (ed.), *Comedy*, (New York, 1956), p. 148.
37. "The norm is an omnipotent ruler over social life. There are laws, principles, regulations, and customs which all exert their influence on the manner of individual behaviour. The social pattern determines all of our life: we must conform to the accepted rules for otherwise society will react against us using a spectre of means from legal punishment to laughter pursuing an improper utterance or an awkward bow. (...) Public opinion turns against every attempt to break away from the reign of the unwritten rules of good form and condemns with laughter deviations from the norm." J. Bystroń, *Komizm* (Wrocław, 1960), pp. 39, 189. Cf. also J. Kleiner, *Z zagadnień komizmu*, in *Studia z zakresu teorii literatury* (Lublin, 1956), pp. 103-104.
38. H. Bergson, *op. cit.*
39. Cf. Kalina, *Bojove poslanie humoru a satiry* (Bratislava, 1953), p. 44.
40. Gogol, *O literature. Izbrannye statii i pisma* (Moscow, 1952), p. 81.

41. W. Sypher, *The Meanings of Comedy*, in R. W. Corrigan, *Comedy. Meaning and Form* (San Francisco, 1965), p. 53.
42. F. Kratky, *Hodnota a sutecnost humoru* (Praha, 1949), pp. 115-119, 212-219; St.Colvin, "The Educational Value of Humour," *The Pedagogical Seminary*, XVI (1907), p. 523.
43. F. Nietzsche, *Human, All-too Human*, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, transl. by Walter Kaufman (New York, 1968). Also Stefan Szuman emphasized the pedagogical meaning of irony saying that "Irony has only one undoubtedly valuable and positive meaning as pedagogical irony. Nothing is so effective in evoking self-criticism and healthy ambition, in compelling us to look into ourselves and give up the threat of hypocrisy into which we wrap ourselves as in a warm coffin of a cocoon, as the irony of our neighbours. There is no other more effective pedagogical means, although there is no other equally painful and unpleasant." Stefan Szuman, *O dowcipie i humorze* (Lvov, 1938), p. 16.
44. B. Prus, "Słówko o krytyce pozytywnej," *Kurier Codzienny*, No 310 (1890).
45. Evnina emphasizes the efficiency of laughter in exerting an influence upon other people. Laughter in all its forms has an enormous suggestive power. It evokes an immediate reaction easily noticed by social classes and therefore is popularly used by moralists, pamphleteers and propagandists trying to influence the masses (*Rabelais* (Warsaw, 1950), p. 279). Boy-Żeleński claims that "killing with laughter is one of the mightiest existing forces." (*Pisma*, Vol. 11 (Warsaw, 1957), p. 40). Cf. also Kalina, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
46. A. A. C. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics...* (Birmingham, 1773), pp. 13-14.
47. A. Lunacharsky, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
48. A. Herzen, *Polnoye sobranye sochineni*, Vol. 9, p. 118.
49. M. Twain, *Notebook* (New York, 1935), p. 118.
50. On the difficulties encountered by a satirist in his contact with the recipients of his work cf. D. Worcester, *The Art of Satire* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 37.
51. Lunacharsky, "O smyeche," *op. cit.*, p. 8.
52. Ch. Perelman, *Traite de L'Argumentation* (Paris, 1958), Vol. 1, pp. 277-281.
53. It is worth mentioning that in 1974 Lucia Olbrechts-Tyteca published a book *Le Comique du discours* (Brussels, 1974) which is a pioneering and a thorough attempt to characterize and systematize various functions exhibited by manifold forms of the comical and of ridicule in discourse and argumentation. The work is based on ample material and takes into account almost all that has been said in the literature on the subject about the role of jokes, irony, mockery, etc., in discussions, argumentation and discourse.
54. A. Lunacharsky, *M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin i Jonatan Swift i jevo "Skazka o bochke"*, in *Stati o literature* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 260, 537-538.
55. Shaftesbury claims that the spirit of derision was born from the spirit of persecution and that laughter is a reaction opposing political and social persecution. Cf. "An Essay of Freedom of Wit and Humour," *Characteristics*, ed. J. M. Robertson (London, 1900), Vol. I, pp. 50-51.
56. Cf. Lunacharsky, *O smyeche*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
57. Cf. U. Guralnik, *Smyech - oruzhe silnyh* (Moscow, 1961), p. 4.

58. J. Kalina, *op. cit.*, p. 161.
59. Elliott quotes the order issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London forbidding the printing of any satires and ordering the burning of works by Hall, Marton and Nash (*op. cit.*, p. 261). Similar facts from Russian history were quoted by W. Aleksandrov-Petrec (*Russkaya demokraticheskaya satira XVII vieka* (Moscow, 1954), pp. 140-150). A. Aleksandrowicz recalls the facts of burning satirical works and lampoons in Poland in the second half of the eighteenth century (1752 and 1768). She also specifies other sanctions imposed by the censorship of the church and the state on satirical productions (*Twórczość satyryczna Adama Naruszewicza* (Wrocław, 1964), p. 20).



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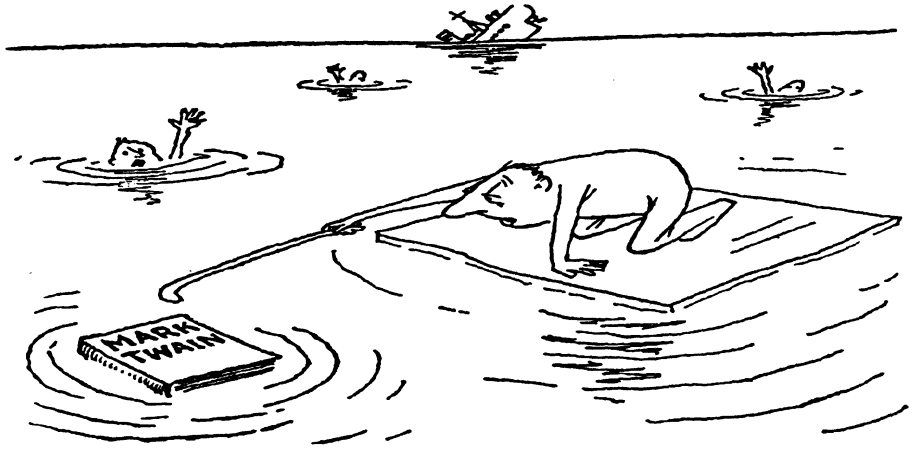

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